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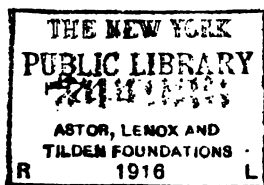
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G. N. 4
TRACTS.

PRINTED AND PUBLISHED
BY THE UNITARIAN SOCIETY
FOR PROMOTING CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE
AND THE PRACTICE OF VIRTUE.

VOL. III.

CONTAINING,
SEVEN SELECT SERMONS.
BY DR. PRICE AND DR. PRIESTLEY.

LONDON:
PRINTED, MDCCXCI.



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ROY W. M.
J. B. M.
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SERMONS,

BY

RICHARD PRICE, D.D. F.R.S.

AND

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London :

PRINTED BY J. DAVIS, CHANCERY-LANE.

M.DCCG.

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S E R M O N I.

OF THE SECURITY OF A VIRTUOUS COURSE.

PROVERBS. x. 9.

HE THAT WALKETH UPRIGHTLY WALKETH
SURELY.

THESE words express one of the most important of all maxims. They tell us, that in the practice of virtue there is *SAFETY*. Much higher praise may be bestowed upon it. We may say that with it are connected peace, honour, dignity, the favour of God, happiness *now*, and *ETERNAL* happiness *hereafter*: And we have reason enough to think this true. But whether true or not, it is at least true, that there is safety in it.

Christianity informs us, that good men will be raised from death, to enjoy a glorious immortality, through that Saviour of the world who tasted death for every man. But let the evidence for this be supposed precarious and unsatisfactory. Let it be reckoned uncertain, whether a virtuous course will terminate in such infinite blessings under the divine government as christians are taught to expect: Still there will remain sufficient evidence to prove,

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that

that in all events it must be the *safest*, and therefore our *wisest* course.

I cannot better employ the present time, than in endeavouring to explain and illustrate this truth. But previously to this, it will not be amiss to make a few observations on the character of the man who walks uprightly.

Uprightness signifies the same with integrity or sincerity. It implies a freedom from guile and the faithful discharge of every known duty. An upright man allows himself in nothing that is inconsistent with truth and right. He complies with all the obligations he is under, and avoids every kind of prevarication and falsehood. He maintains an equal and uniform regard to the whole of righteousness. He hates alike all sin, and practises every part of virtue, from an unfeigned attachment to it established in his soul. This is what is most essential to the character of an upright man. He is governed by no sinister ends, or indirect views, in the discharge of his duty. It is not the love of fame, or the desire of private advantages, or mere natural temper, that produces his virtuous conduct; but an affection to virtue *as* virtue; a sense of the weight and excellence of the obligations of righteousness; and a zeal for the honour of God and the happiness of mankind. But to be a little more particular:—

Uprightness of character comprehends in it right
conduct

conduct with respect to God, and man, and ourselves. The person I am describing, is, first of all, upright in all his transactions with GOD. His religion is not a hypocritical show and ostentation. He *is* that which he *appears* to be to his fellow-creatures. His religious acts are emanations from a heart full of piety. He makes conscience of *private* as well as *public* devotion, and endeavours to walk blameless in all God's ordinances. He attends on religious services, not to be seen of men, but from a sense of duty and gratitude to his Maker; and, instead of making them a cover for bad designs, or compensations for immorality, he makes them incentives to the discharge of all moral duties, and the means of rendering him more benevolent, amiable, and worthy.

Again. Uprightness implies faithfulness in all our transactions with *ourselves*. It is very common for men to impose upon themselves; to wink at offensive truths; and to practise unfair arts with their own minds. This is entirely inconsistent with the character of an upright man. He endeavours to be faithful to himself in all that he thinks and does, and to divest his mind of all unreasonable biases. He is fair and honest in all his inquiries and deliberations, ready to own his mistakes, and thankful for every help to discover them. He wishes to know nothing but what is true, and to *practise* nothing but what is right. He is open to conviction,

tion, indifferent where he finds truth, and prepared to follow it wherever it can lead him. He is often disciplining his heart, searching into the principles of conduct within him, and labouring to detect his faults in order to rectify them.

Further. Uprightness includes in it candour, fairness, and honesty in all our transactions with our *fellow-creatures*. An upright man may be depended upon in all his professions and engagements. He never, in any affair, goes beyond the limits of justice and equity. He never deceives or overreaches. He is true to his promises, and faithful to every trust reposed in him. All his gains are the gains of virtuous industry. All falsehood and lies, all low cunning and fraudulent practices are his abhorrence. In short; he maintains a strict regard to veracity in his words, and to honour in his dealings. He adheres stedfastly in all circumstances to what he judges to be rightest and best; and were it possible for you to look through his soul, you would see the love of goodness predominant within him. You would see benevolence and piety governing his thoughts. You would see him within the inclosure of his own breast, as honest and worthy as he is on the open stage of the world.

Such is the character of the man who walks uprightly. I am next to show you how *surely* he walks.

In order to acquire a just notion of this, it is proper we should take into consideration, first, the

the safety which such a person enjoys with respect to the happiness of the present life. Nothing is plainer than that, if we regard only our temporal interest, an upright course is the safest course. In order to be sensible of this, you should think of the troubles which men very often bring upon themselves by deviating from integrity. It is very difficult to go on for any time in dishonesty and falsehood, without falling into perplexity and distress. A man in such a course suspects every body, and is suspected by every body. He wants the love and esteem of his fellow-creatures. He is obliged to be continually on his guard, and to use arts to evade law and justice. He walks in the dark along a crooked path full of snares and pits. On the contrary, the path of uprightness is straight and broad. It is smooth, open, and easy. He that walks in it walks in the light, and may go on with resolution and confidence, inviting rather than avoiding the inspection of his fellow creatures. He is apprehensive of no dangers. He is afraid of no detection. He is liable to none of the causes of shame and disgrace. It is an advantage to him to be observed and watched. The more narrowly his conduct is examined, the more he will be loved and respected.

A person, for instance, who, in the affairs of trade, deviates from truth and honour, is likely to sink into great calamities. Want, and trouble,

and infancy often prove his lot. Most of us have been witnesses of this. How many instances are there of persons who, forsaking the plain path of uprightness, have entangled themselves beyond the possibility of being extricated, and involved their families in the deepest misery; but who probably, had they been honest, would have escaped every difficulty, and passed through life easily and happily? We know not, indeed, what we do, when we turn aside from virtue and righteousness. Such a train of consequences may follow, as will issue in the loss of all that is valuable. It is past doubt, that, in every profession and calling, the way of uprightness is the most free from perplexity. It is the way of peace and satisfaction. He that keeps in it will at least avoid the pain of a reproaching conscience. He is sure of enjoying his own approbation; and it may be expected, that his worldly affairs will go on smoothly, quietly, and comfortably.

This puts me in mind of desiring you to consider particularly, that an upright conduct is commonly the most sure way to obtain success in our worldly concerns. You will observe, that I say it is the most *sure* way; not that it is the *shortest*. There are many more *expeditious* ways of getting money and acquiring fortunes. He that will violate the rules of justice, or break the laws of his country, or not scruple to take false oaths, may easily get
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the start of an upright man, and rise in a little time to wealth and preferment. It is often in a man's power, by a base action, to introduce himself at once into ease and plenty. But wretched are those men who secure any worldly advantages by such methods. There is a canker at the root of their successes and riches. What they gain is unspeakably less than what they lose. It is attended with inward anguish, with the curse of heaven, and inconceivable future danger. But though it must be thus acknowledged, that there are *shorter* ways to profit and success than by walking uprightly, there are certainly none so *sure*. Universal experience has proved that (agreeably to a common and excellent maxim) "honesty is the best policy." It may be slow in its operation; and, for this reason, many persons have not patience enough for it. But it is in the end generally certain. An upright man must recommend himself by degrees to all that know him. He has always the greatest credit, and the most unembarrassed affairs. There are none who are not disposed to place a confidence in him, and who do not choose to deal with him. The disadvantages, therefore, already mentioned, under which he labours, are counterbalanced by many great advantages. He may not be able to thrive so fast, nor perhaps so *much* as others. He is obliged to deny himself the gains which others make by the wrong practices common in their trade; and, on

this account, he may be under a necessity of contenting himself with small gains. But it must be considered, that he can seldom fail of a tolerable subsistence, attended with comfort and the truest enjoyment of himself. Though his gains may be small, they are always sweet. He has with them an easy conscience, the blessing of God, and security against numberless grievous evils. And the smallest gains of this sort are infinitely preferable to the greatest gains that can be obtained by wrong methods.

Thus you see that, with respect to our interest in *this* world, he that walketh uprightly walketh surely.—Let us next consider the security which an upright conduct gives with respect to *another* world.

After this life is over, we are to enter on another world. The most sceptical principles give us no sufficient reason for denying this. Whatever may be true of the order and administration of nature, it must be *possible* that there should be a future state. And, if there is, it is highly probable, that it will be a state of much greater extent and longer duration than the present. Nothing, therefore, can be of more consequence to us than to know by what means we may secure the best condition and the greatest safety in it: And it is not possible to doubt, but the practice of religious goodness is the proper means to be used for this purpose. If any thing is
clear

clear, it is so, that the upright and the worthy, in all events, through every period of duration, must stand the best chance for escaping misery and obtaining happiness. That our happiness hereafter may depend on our conduct here is certain, because we find, in the present state, that the happiness of every successive period of human life is made to depend, in a great measure, on our conduct in the preceding periods. The happiness of mature life depends on the habits acquired and the pains taken in early life; and mature life spent in folly and vice generally makes a miserable old age. It is, therefore, very credible that a virtuous conduct may have an effect on our condition hereafter. No one, indeed, can well carry infidelity so far as to deny, that, if there is a future state, it is likely that the righteous will fare better in it than the wicked. All we observe of the government of the Deity, and all that we can learn with respect to his character, leads us to believe that he must approve righteousness and hate wickedness: And, in the same proportion that he does this, he must favour the one and discountenance the other. We see, in what lies before us of the constitution of the world, many great evils annexed to wickedness, and many great blessings annexed to righteousness; and we see, likewise, in the one an essential tendency to produce universal evil, and in the other an essential tendency to produce universal good.

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This demonstrates to us the holy disposition of the Author of nature; and what we ought to reckon upon, is, that he will manifest this disposition more and more; and that the scheme of moral government now begun will be hereafter completed. To act righteously is to act like God. It is to promote the order of his creation. It is to go into his constitution of nature. It is to follow that conscience which he has given us to be the guide of our conduct. It must, therefore, be the likeliest way to arrive at happiness, and to guard against misery under his government. The accountableness of our natures, and our necessary perceptions of excellence and good desert in virtue, demonstrate this; nor is it at all conceivable, that we do not go upon sure grounds, when we draw this conclusion. But there is much more to be here said. There are many reasons which prove, that the neglect of virtue may be followed by a dreadful punishment hereafter. The presages of conscience; the concurring voice of mankind in all ages; our unavoidable apprehensions of ill-desert in vice; and the distresses now produced by it, are enough to lead us to expect this. The christian religion confirms this expectation in a manner the most awful, by teaching us that the *wicked shall be turned into hell with all that forget God*; that they shall be excluded from the society of wise and good beings; and punished *with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and the*

the glory of his power. It is, at least, possible that this may be the truth. The arguments for a righteous government in nature, and for the truth of christianity, have at least force enough to prove that it is not certain but that wickedness will produce the greatest losses and evils in another world; and that, consequently, there is a real and inconceivable danger attending it. Consider, now, that an upright life is a sure preservative from this danger. If all who forget God, and practise iniquity, are hereafter to be rejected by the Deity, and to be consigned to *everlasting destruction*; if, I say, this should prove to be the truth, the good man will be safe, and the wicked man undone. But should all that reason and christianity teach us on this point prove a delusion; still a good man will *lose* nothing, and a bad man will *get* nothing. Nay, a good man, even in this case, will gain a great deal; for he will gain all that satisfaction which goodness generally brings with it in this life, and which vice must want.

Thus you see what security an upright man enjoys. He goes upon even and firm ground. He has on his side all good beings; the convictions of his conscience; the order of nature; and the power of the Deity. It is impossible he should be deceived in thinking, that it is right to adhere inviolably to the laws of righteousness. Should there be that execution of divine justice on wickedness
which

which we have been taught to expect, he will have nothing to fear. The *worst* that can happen to him is better than the *best* that may happen to an unrighteous man. The *best* that wicked men generally expect is the loss of existence at death; and this is the *worst* that can happen to a good man. But upon the one, it will come after a life of shame, and disease, and folly; and on the other, like sleep at night after a day spent in peace, and health, and honour, and useful labour. I need not tell you what a recommendation this is of a course of uprightness. It is our surest guard in all events; our best shelter against evils under God's government. Safety is what every person, in the common concerns of life, values and seeks. Here alone is it to be found completely and certainly. Nothing but a virtuous conduct can preserve us from the danger of God's displeasure, and of ruin after death. Without it we must stand exposed to the severest calamities that can come upon reasonable beings.

I will conclude this discourse with the following inferences.

First, From all I have said we learn, in the plainest manner, how much we are bound in prudence to walk uprightly. This appears to be prudent, if we regard only our present interest. The way in which an upright man walks (it has been shown) is plain and open. It is so easy to find it,
that

that we can never swerve from it, while we retain an honest desire to keep in it. It is liable to no hazards; and it is always pleasant and joyous. More *compendious* ways, I have acknowledged, we may sometimes find to wealth and power, but they are full of danger; and he who forsakes integrity in order to go into them, and thus by a short cut to get at worldly advantages, acts like a man who forsakes a quiet and sure path in order to run the risk of being lost among quicksands, or of breaking his neck by going over rocks and precipices. If, therefore, we love prudence, we shall not, in our temporal concerns, ever swerve from uprightness.

But we have reason to apprehend that we shall exist in another state; and if we consider this, we shall be forced to conclude from what has been said, that the prudence of a virtuous course is greater than can be expressed. If this life be not our whole existence, some precautions ought to be used with respect to the state that is to succeed it; and the best precaution is the practice of true piety and goodness. If there be a life to come, it will, in all probability, be a state of retribution, where present inequalities will be set right, and the vicious sink into infamy and misery. The practice of virtue is, in this case, our security. It is the image of the Deity in our souls; and what we ought to reckon upon is, that nothing amiss will ever hap-

pen to it. Let us then adhere to it in all events. Let us endeavour, in this instance, to use the same prudence that the children of the world use in *the* affairs. What pains will they take, and what precautions will they employ, to avoid any danger which they foresee, or to prevent evils which may possibly come upon them? There is a danger hanging over us, as moral agents, greater than any this world can threaten us with; a danger dreadful and unutterable; the danger of falling into the punishment of sin, and of losing eternal happiness. Were there ever so hard and expensive a method proposed to us of being secured against this danger, it would be our wisdom cheerfully to practise it. But true goodness affords us, not a hard and expensive, but a cheap and easy method of being secured against it. Walking uprightly will add to our *present* comfort, at the same time that it will preserve us from *future* danger. What is required of us, in this instance, is only to part with our follies and diseases; and to make ourselves happy *now* in order to be safe *for ever*.

All I have been saying is true, though there should be the greatest uncertainty with respect to the principles of religion. I have been all along speaking on the supposition of such an uncertainty in order to set before you, in a stronger light, the wisdom of being virtuous, and the folly of a sinful course. But if we will suppose that there is an uncertainty

uncertainty: If we will suppose it not only possible, but probable or morally certain, that the principles of religion are true; that christianity comes from God; and that, agreeably to its assurances, all who are now in their graves shall hereafter *hear the voice of the Son of God, and come forth, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of damnation*: If, I say, we suppose this to be the truth, how great will the wisdom of a virtuous course appear, and how shocking the folly of wickedness?

There are, probably, few speculative and inquiring men, who do not sometimes find themselves in a state of dejection, which takes from them much of the satisfaction arising from their faith in very important and interesting truths. Happy, indeed, is the person who enjoys a flow of spirits, so even and constant as never to have experienced this. Of myself I must say, that I have been far from being so happy. Doubts and difficulties have often perplexed me, and thrown a cloud over truths which, in the general course of my life, are my support and consolation. There are, however, many truths, the conviction of which I never lose. — ONE conviction in particular remains with me amidst all fluctuations of temper and spirits; I mean my belief of the maxim in my text, that he *who walketh uprightly walketh surely*. There has not been a moment in which I have found it pos-

able to doubt, whether the wisest and best course I can take be to practise virtue and to avoid guilt. Low spirits only give new force to this conviction, and cause it to make a deeper impression. Uncertainty in other instances *creates* certainty here; for the more dark and doubtful our state under God's government is, the more prudent it must be to choose that course which is the *safest*.

I will only further desire you to consider on this subject, with what serenity of mind a good man may proceed through life. Whatever is true or false, he has the consciousness of being on the *safe* side; and there is, in all cases, a particular satisfaction attending such a consciousness. A man who knows himself in a safe way goes on with composure and boldness. Thus may you go on in a course of well-doing. You have none of those calamities to fear to which others are liable. If the doctrines of religion be true, you will be completely happy through the Saviour of mankind. But should they *not* prove true, you will not be worse off than others. I have shown, on the contrary, that you will still be gainers. Your loss, in short, *can be nothing*. Your gain *may be infinite*. Forake, then, every thing to follow righteousness. Never consent to do a wrong action, or to gratify an unlawful passion. This will give you a security that is worth more than all the treasures of the earth. You may also, on all principles, entertain
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the *apprehension* that the gospel has given right information concerning the abolition of death, and the happiness reserved for the faithful, in the future kingdom of Jesus Christ. That person must have considered the arguments for christianity very superficially, who does not see, that they amount to an evidence, which is at least sufficient to give a just ground for this *apprehension*; and, consequently, for a *hope* the most animating and glorious. Let us cherish this hope; and endeavour to keep the object of it always in sight. The slightest GLIMPSE of that ETERNAL LIFE which the New Testament promises, is enough to elevate above this world. The bare possibility of losing it, by sinful practices, is enough to annihilate all temptations. Wherefore, *let us be steadfast and immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as we know that our labour MAY end in a blissful eternity; but, happen what will, CANNOT be in vain.*

S E R M O N II.

OF THE HAPPINESS OF A VIRTUOUS COURSE.

PROVERBS iii. 17.

HER WAYS ARE WAYS OF PLEASANTNESS,
AND ALL HER PATHS ARE PEACE. SHE IS
A TREE OF LIFE TO THEM THAT LAY HOLD
OF HER; AND HAPPY IS EVERY ONE THAT
RETAINETH HER.

IN my last discourse, I represented to you the *security* of a virtuous course. In doing this, I was led to touch upon its tendency to make us most *happy*, as well as most *secure*, under God's government. I shall now insist more particularly on this subject; and endeavour to give you a distinct account of the principal arguments and facts which prove the happiness of virtue; meaning, on this occasion, chiefly its *present* happiness.

The ways of wisdom (my text says) are ways of pleasantness, and happy is every one that retaineth her.

Previously to any examination of the *actual* state of mankind, we may perceive a high probability that this assertion must be true. Virtue is the image of God in the soul, and the noblest thing in
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the creation; and, therefore, it must be the principal ground of true happiness. It is the rule by which God meant that we should act; and, therefore, must be the way to the bliss for which he intended us. That Being who gave us our sense of moral obligations, ~~must have~~ designed that we should conform to them; and he could not design this, and at the same time design that we should find it most for our advantage *not* to conform to them. This would have been to establish an inconsistency in the frame of nature; and acting in a manner which cannot be supposed of that supreme power, which, in every other part of nature, has discovered higher wisdom than we are able to comprehend.

But waving such reasonings, let us apply ourselves to the consideration of the *actual* state of mankind in this respect. And,

First, Let us consider, that by practising virtue we gratify the highest powers in our natures. Our highest powers are, undoubtedly, our sense of moral excellence, the principle of reason and reflection, benevolence to our fellow-creatures, and the love of the Deity. To practise virtue is to act in conformity to these powers, and to furnish them with their proper gratifications. Our other powers [being inferior to these and of less dignity, the happiness grounded upon them is also of an inferior nature, and of less value. Reason is the *nature* of a reasonable

reasonable being; and to assert that his chief happiness consists in deviating from reason, would be the same as to say that his chief happiness consists in violating his *nature*, and contradicting *himself*.

Secondly, In connexion with this we ought to remember, that virtue, in the very idea of it, implies health and order of mind. The human soul is a composition of various affections standing in different relations to one another; and all placed under the direction of conscience, our supreme faculty. When we are truly virtuous, none of these affections are suffered to err either by excess or defect. They are kept in their proper subordinations to one another. The faculty that was made to govern preserves its authority; and a due balance is maintained among our inward powers. To be virtuous, therefore, is to be in our natural and sound state. It is to be freed from all inward tumult, anarchy, and tyranny. It is to enjoy health, and order, and vigour, and peace, and liberty; and, therefore, the greatest happiness. Vice, on the contrary, is slavery, disorder, and sickness. It distorts our inward frame, and unsettles the adjustments of our minds. It unduly raises some of our powers, and depresses others. It dethrones conscience, and subjects it to the despotism of blind and lawless appetites. In short; there is the same difference, in respect of happiness, between a virtuous and a vicious soul; as there is between a *dis-*
tempered

tempered body and a body that is *well*; or between a civil state where confusion, faction, and licentiousness reign, and a state where order prevails, and all keep their proper places, and unite in submission to a wise and good legislature.

Again, thirdly; It is worth our consideration, that, by practising virtue, we gain more of the united pleasures, arising from the gratification of *all* our powers, than we can in any other way. That is, in other words, our moral powers, when prevalent, encroach less on the inferior enjoyments of our natures than any of our other powers when *they* are prevalent. In order to explain this, I would desire you to consider, that the course most favourable to happiness must be that which takes from us the least that is possible of any of the gratifications and enjoyments we are capable of. We can take no course that will give us an equal and full share of all the gratifications of our appetites. If we will gain the ends of some of our affections, we must sacrifice others. If, for instance, we will rise to fame and power, we must give up ease and pleasure. We must cringe and truckle, and do violence to some of our strongest inclinations. In like manner, if we make money our principal pursuit, and would acquire wealth, we must often contradict our desires of fame and honour. We must keep down generosity and benevolence, and the love of sensual indulgences. We must pinch, and toil,
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and watch, and eat the bread of carefulness. An *ambitious* man must sacrifice the gratifications of the *covetous* man. A *covetous* man likewise, must sacrifice the indulgences of a *man of pleasure*: and a *man of pleasure* those of the *ambitious* and *worldly-minded*. Since, then, in *every* course of life, there is such an interference between the several objects of our affections, that course in which there is the *least* of it, must be likely to make us most happy. And it is certain, that there is less of it in a virtuous course than any other. Virtue brings with it many exquisite pleasures of its own (as I shall presently observe more particularly), and, at the same time, does not necessarily encroach on other sources of pleasure. It is the very best means of obtaining the ends of most of our *lower* powers and affections. It is, for instance, the best means of gaining honour and distinction among our fellow-creatures; for the virtuous man is always the man who is most honoured and loved. It is, likewise, one of the best means of becoming prosperous in our affairs, and gaining a competent share of worldly blessings; for, agreeably to a maxim which we hear often repeated, "honesty is the best policy." A virtuous man is the man who is most industrious, and likely to be most encouraged and trusted in every trade and profession. In short; it is a part of virtue to make use cheerfully of all the materials of happiness with which divine bounty has supplied us. There
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is no lawful and natural pleasure of which it does not leave us in possession. It is favourable to every innocent pursuit, and an excellent friend to every just and laudable undertaking.

These observations remove entirely the objection to the happiness of virtue, taken from its requiring labour and circumspection, and obliging us to restrain our passions, and to practise self-denial. It is, indeed, true, that virtue requires this: but you should recollect, that it is by no means peculiar to virtue. I have, on the contrary, been showing that it is less applicable to virtue than to any other object of pursuit. What labour and self-denial do men often practise in pursuing fame, or honour, or money! What a sacrifice does the man of pleasure make of his health and fortune; and to what fatigues does he often put himself! It is, therefore, the utmost injustice to virtue to imagine that the restraint of inclination, and the practice of self-denial, are peculiar to it. These are common to virtue and vice, and necessary whatever course we take. It would be very unreasonable to mention as an objection here, that virtue may oblige us to sacrifice to it even our lives. For this is what happens perpetually in vicious courses. Thousands are every day dying martyrs to ambition, to lust, to covetousness, and intemperance. But seldom does it happen, that virtue puts us to any such trial.

trial. On the contrary; its general effect is to preserve and lengthen life.

It ought to be particularly observed on this occasion, that, in comparing the influence of different courses on our happiness, we should consider the influence they have on our moral and intellectual powers, as well as our other powers. Conscience is one important part of our natures. To leave it out, therefore, in forming a scheme of enjoyment, or in determining what course will bring us most happiness, would be preposterous and wild. That a course of conduct obliges us to run counter to our sense of moral good and evil, and to give up the satisfactions founded on this sense, ought to be allowed its just weight in judging of the happiness of an agent, and to be considered as a circumstance diminishing his pleasures, in the same manner as if he ran counter to any of his other powers, or gave up any other gratifications. Now, every species of vice interferes directly with our sense of moral good and evil. It gratifies one part of our natures at the expense of our judgment and reason; and this is as much an argument proving its hurtfulness, as if it opposed our desires of ease, or honour, or any of our other particular affections. There is, therefore, on this account, a severe and cruel self-denial in vice. At the same time that it encroaches on many of the lower springs of action, it puts a force upon the highest. It obliges us to

deny our consciences; and, these being most properly *ourselves*, it obliges us to practise a more proper and unnatural self-denial than any denial of passion and appetite.

But, to say no more on this head, what I have meant chiefly to inculcate is, that the course most conducive to happiness must be that which is most agreeable to our *whole* natures; and that this being evidently true of a virtuous course, it follows that it is our greatest happiness.

Hitherto, you have seen that I have argued for the happiness of virtue from the considerations, “that it affords our highest powers the proper gratifications; that it implies health, and liberty, and order of mind; and that it is more agreeable than any other end we can pursue to all the parts of our natures taken as making together one system.” There is a great deal more to be said, to which I must request your attention; for,

Fourthly, It deserves your consideration, that much of the pleasure of vice itself depends on some species or other of virtue combined with it. All the joys we derive from friendship, from family-connections and affinities, from the love and confidence of our fellow-creatures, and from the intercourse of good offices, are properly *virtuous* joys: and there is no course of life which, were it deprived of these joys, would not be completely miserable. The enjoyments, therefore, of vicious men are owing to
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the remains of virtuous qualities in them. There is no man so vicious as to have nothing good left in his character; and could we conceive any such man, or meet with a person who was quite void of benevolence, temperance, good-humour, sociableness, and honour, we should detest him as an odious monster, and find that he was incapable of all happiness. Wickedness, when considered by itself and in its naked form, without any connexion with lovely qualities, is nothing but shame, and pain, and distress. If the *debauchee* enjoys any thing like happiness, it is because he joins to his debauchery something laudable, and his tender and social feelings are not extirpated. In like manner, if a *covetous* man has any thing besides perplexity and gloominess in his heart, it is because there are some virtues which he practises, or because he disguises his covetousness under the forms of the virtues of prudence and frugality. This then being the case, since even the pleasure that vice enjoys is thus founded upon and derived from virtuous qualities, how plain is it that these constitute our chief good, and that the more of them we possess, so much the more must we possess of the sources of pleasure! The virtuous man is the most generous man, the most friendly, the most good-natured, the most patient and contented. He has most of the satisfactions resulting from sympathy, and humanity, and natural affection; and so certain is

it that such a person must be the happiest, that the wicked themselves, if in any respect happy, can be so only as far as they either *are* the same that he is, or *think* themselves the same.

Fifthly, I have already observed, that virtue leaves us in possession of all the common enjoyments of life. It is necessary now to add, that it goes much beyond this. It not only leaves us in possession of all innocent and natural pleasures, but improves and refines them. It not only interferes *less* with the gratification of our different powers than vice does, but renders the gratification of many of them *more* the cause of pleasure. This effect it produces by restraining us to regularity and moderation in the gratification of our desires. Virtue forbids only the wild and extravagant gratification of our desires; That is, it forbids only such a gratification of them as goes beyond the bounds of nature, and lays the foundation of pain and misery. As far as they were designed by our Maker to yield pleasure, we are at liberty to indulge them; and further we cannot go without losing pleasure. It is a truth generally acknowledged, that the regular and moderate gratification of appetite is more agreeable than any forced and exorbitant gratification of it. Excess in every way is painful and pernicious. We can never contradict nature without suffering and bringing upon ourselves inconveniences. Is there any man to whom food and sleep are so pleasant as
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to the temperate man? Are the mad and polluted joys of the fornicator and adulterer equal to the pure and chaste joys of the married state? Do pampered and loaded appetites afford as much delight as appetites kept under discipline, and never palled by riot and licentiousness? Is the vile glutton, the loathsome drunkard, or the rotten debauchee, as happy as the sober and virtuous man, who has a healthful body, a serene mind, and general credit?

Thus is virtue a friend even to appetite. But this is not the observation I intended to insist on. What I meant here principally to recommend to your attention was, that virtue improves all the blessings of life, by putting us into a particular disposition for receiving pleasure from them. It removes those internal evils, which pollute and impair the springs of enjoyment within us. It renders the mind easy and satisfied within itself, and therefore more susceptible of delight, and more open to all agreeable impressions. It is a common observation, that the degree of pleasure which we receive from any objects depends on the disposition we are in to receive pleasure. Nothing is sweet to a depraved taste; nothing beautiful to a distempered eye. This observation holds with particular force in the present case. Vice destroys the relish of sensible pleasures. It takes off (I may say) from the fruit its flavour, and from the rose its hue. It tarnishes the beauty of nature, and communicates

a bitter tincture to every enjoyment. Virtue, on the contrary, sweetens every blessing, and throws new lustre on the face of nature. It chafes away gloominess and peevishness; and, by strengthening the kind affections, and introducing into the soul good humour and tranquillity, makes every pleasing scene and occurrence more pleasing.

Again, sixthly; Let us consider how many *peculiar* joys virtue has, which nothing else can give. It is not possible to enumerate all these. We may, on this occasion, recollect first those joys which necessarily spring from the worthy and generous affections. The love of the Deity, benevolence, meekness, and gratitude, are by their nature attended with pleasure. They put the mind into a serene and cheerful frame, and introduce into it some of the most delightful sensations. Virtue consists in the exercise and cultivation of these principles. They form the temper and constitute the character of a virtuous man; and, therefore he must enjoy pleasures to which men of a contrary character are strangers. It is not conceivable, that a person in whom the mild and generous affections thrive should not be in a more happy state than one who counteracts and suppresses them; and who, instead of feeling the joy which springs up in a heart where the heavenly graces and virtues reside, is torn and distracted by anger, malice, and envy.

But further; Peace of conscience is another blessing

bleſſing peculiar to virtue. It reconciles us to ourſelves as well as to all the world. As nothing can be ſo horrid as to be at variance with one's ſelf, ſo nothing can be ſo delightful as to be at peace with one's ſelf. If we are unhappy within our own breſts, it ſignifies little what external advantages we enjoy. If we want *our own* approbation, it is of little conſequence how much *others* applaud us. Virtue ſecures to us our own approbation. It reduces to harmony, under the dominion of conſcience, all our jarring powers. It makes our reflections agreeable to us; and the mind a fund of comfort to itſelf.

Again; A ſenſe of God's favour is another ſource of pleaſure which is peculiar to virtue. The Divine government is an object of terror to a wicked man. He cannot think of it without trouble. But a virtuous man derives his chief conſolations from hence. He is conſcious of acting in concert with the Deity, of obeying his laws, and of imitating his perfections. He, therefore, exults in the aſſurance of having him on his ſide, and of being under his Almighty protection. He knows that the Sovereign of the univerſe loves him, and is his unalterable friend.

Once more. A virtuous man poſſeſſes the hope of a future reward. Every one knows how mighty the power of hope is to invigorate and cheer the mind. There is no ſuch hope as that of the virtu-

ous man. He hopes for a perfect government in the heavens; and this comforts him amidst all the disorders of earthly governments. He hopes for a resurrection from death to a blessed immortality. He expects soon to take possession of a treasure in the heavens that faileth not; to receive an incorruptible inheritance; to exchange ignorance and doubt for knowledge; and to be fixed in that world where he shall join superior beings, and be always growing more wise, and good, and great, and happy, till some time or other he shall rise to honours and powers which are no more possible to be now conceived by him, than the powers of an angel can be conceived by a child in the womb. This is indeed an unbounded and ravishing hope. If christianity be true, we have abundant reason for it. Christ came into the world to raise us to it; and the most distant glimmering of it is enough to eclipse all the glory of this world.

Such are the singular blessings of the virtuous man.

Let us, in the next place, take into consideration some peculiar qualities of the happiness now described. This will complete our view of this subject, and render it unnecessary to add any thing to convince an attentive person of the truth I am insisting upon. Virtue has a great deal of *peculiar* happiness; and that happiness has many excellent qualities, which belong to no other happiness. It is, for instance, more *permanent* than any other happiness.

happinefs. The pleasures of the vicious are *transient*; but virtue is a spring of *constant* pleasure and satisfaction. The pleasures which attend the gratification of our appetites soon pall. They are gone for ever after the moment of gratification; and, when carried to excess, they turn to pain and disgust. But nothing like this can be said of the pleasures of virtue. These never cloy or satiate. They can never be carried to excess. They are always new and fresh. They may be repeated as often as we please, without losing their relish. They are such as will not only *bear* repetition and reflection, but are *improved* by them. They will go with us to all places; and attend us through every changing scene of life. No inclosures of stone or iron, no intervention of seas and kingdoms can keep them from us. They delight alike at home and abroad; by day and by night; in the city and in the desert. The aid of wine and of company is not necessary to enable us to enjoy them. They are, in truth, enjoyed in the greatest perfection, when the mind, collecting itself within itself, and withdrawing itself from all worldly objects, fixes its attention only on its own state and prospects.

It follows from these observations, that the happiness of virtue is a more *independent* happiness than any other. It is, if I may so speak, more *one* with the soul; and, therefore, less subject to the operations of external causes. The pleasure arising

arising from the consciousness of having done a worthy action, of having relieved a distressed family, or subdued our anger, our envy, or our impatience; this is a pleasure which enters into the very substance of the soul, and cannot be torn from it without tearing it from itself, and destroying its existence. All other pleasures are precarious in the highest degree. We have but little power over them; and they may be taken from us, the next moment, in spite of our strongest efforts to retain them. But the joy connected with a right action, with a self-approving heart, and the hope of a glorious eternity, no accidents can take away. These are *inward* blessings which are not liable to be affected by *outward* causes; and which produce a happiness that is immutable, and not possible to be lost, except with our own consent.

There is nothing that the ancient philosophers have taken so much pains to inculcate, as the importance of placing our happiness only in things within our power. If we place it in fame, or money, or any external good, it will have a most deceitful foundation, and we shall be liable to perpetual disappointment: Whereas, if we place it in the exercise of virtuous affections, in tranquillity of mind, in regular passions, in doing God's will, and the hope of his favour; we shall have it always at our command. We shall never be liable to disappointments. We shall find
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true rest to our souls, and be in a situation like to that of a person lifted to the upper regions of the atmosphere, who hears thunder roll, and sees lightnings flash, and the clouds spread below him, while he enjoys serenity and sunshine.

I must add, that the happiness of virtue is a *pure* and *refined* happiness. It is seated in the mind. Other happiness has its seat in the body. It is the happiness of angels. Other happiness is the happiness of brutes. It must, therefore, be also the most solid, the most substantial and exalted happiness. I observe this, because I believe the generality of men are disposed to look upon no happiness as solid which is purely spiritual. What I have just said affords a demonstration of the contrary. The most exalted happiness must be that of superior beings, of angels, and of the Deity. But this is a happiness that is spiritual, and which has no connection with the gratifications of sense. The happiness of the virtuous, therefore, being of the same kind, it must be the most real and substantial.

To say no more on this head; Let me desire you to consider, that the happiness of the virtuous man continues with him even in affliction. This is one of the most distinguishing properties of this happiness. Virtue, as it increases the relish of prosperity, blunts likewise the edge of adversity. It is, indeed, in adversity, that the power of virtue to make us happy appears to the greatest advantage.

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It kindles a light in the soul in the darkest seasons, and very often produces then the highest bliss when animal nature is at the lowest, and other joys have deserted us. There is, in this respect, a most striking difference between the condition of the virtuous and vicious man. In adversity the vicious man becomes completely wretched. He has no comfortable reflexions to support him; no protecting Deity to trust in; no prospect of future blessings to encourage him. Wherever he turns his eyes, all is confusion and distress. Reason and conscience have him to themselves, and inflict the sharpest sufferings. But the virtuous man in adversity may rejoice and exult. Whatever he now suffers, he may be assured that all will end happily. When flesh and heart sink under him, faith and hope and charity unite their influence to sustain him. A heavenly voice whispers peace to him, when all about him speaks terror; and the consolations of God delight his soul, when the springs of worldly comfort are dried up. Particularly, in the solemn hour of death he has reason to be composed and cheerful. That is the hour which seals the vicious man under ruin; but it confirms and perfects the happiness of the virtuous man, and sets him free for ever from pain and danger. He can therefore look forward to it without disturbance, and meet it joyfully. Religious and virtuous principles, if they have their due efficacy, will enable us to die with dignity and triumph

They will change the aspect of the king of terrors into that of a friend and deliverer, and cause us to desire and welcome his stroke.

Thus have I shown you that religious virtue is our chief good. And we may now, with full conviction, take up the words of my text, and say with Solomon, *That her ways are ways of pleasantness, and that all her paths are peace; that she is a tree of life to them that lay hold of her; and that happy is every one that retaineth her.*

I will only further desire your attention to the following inferences.

First. How wrong is it to conceive of religious virtue as an enemy to pleasure! This is doing it the greatest injustice. It is, without all doubt, the very best friend to true pleasure. Were we indeed to judge of it from the stiffness and severity of some who pretend to it, we might be forced to entertain a different opinion of it. But such persons do not show it us in its true form. They mistake its nature, and are strangers to its genuine spirit. One part of the duty it requires of us, is to accept thankfully every innocent gratification of life, and to rejoice evermore. Instead of driving us, with the wretched votaries of superstition, into deserts and cloisters, and making us morose and gloomy, it calls us out into society, and disposes us to constant alacrity and cheerfulness.

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Secondly.

Secondly. What strong evidence have we for the moral government of the Deity? You have seen that he has so constituted nature that virtue is, by its necessary tendency, our greatest bliss. He is, therefore, on the side of virtue. By establishing the connexion I have been representing between it and happiness, he has declared himself its friend in a manner the most decisive. What we see take place of this connexion in the present life is the beginning of a moral government; and it should lead us to expect a future life, where what is now begun will be completed; where every present irregularity will be set right, virtue receive its *full* reward, and vice its *full* punishment.

Lastly. What reasons have we for seeking virtue above all things? You have heard how happy it will make us. Let us then pray for it earnestly; and despise every thing that can come in competition with it. If we *have* this, we can *want* nothing that is desirable. If we *want* this, we can *have* nothing that will do us any substantial service. Go then, all ye careless and irreligious men. Take to yourselves your money, your honours, and polluted pleasures. I would desire VIRTUE only. There is nothing else worth an eager wish. Here would I centre all my cares and labours. May God grant me this, and deny me what else he pleases! This is his choicest blessing; his best and richest gift. This
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that tree of life whose leaf never withers, and whose fruit will revive us in every hour of dejection, cure all our maladies, and prolong our existence to endless ages; for, as St. Paul speaks, *if we have the fruit unto belinefs, our end will be EVERLASTING LIFE.*

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S E R M O N I I I.

OF THE RESURRECTION OF LAZARUS.

JOHN XI. 43, 44.

AND WHEN HE HAD THUS SPOKEN, HE CRIED WITH A LOUD VOICE: LAZARUS, COME FORTH! AND HE THAT WAS DEAD CAME FORTH BOUND HAND AND FOOT WITH GRAVE-CLOTHES. AND HIS FACE WAS BOUND ABOUT WITH A NAPKIN. JESUS SAITH TO THEM; LOOSE HIM, AND LET HIM GO.

My design from these words, is to make a few observations on the miraculous fact related in them. This is one of the most remarkable of all our Saviour's miracles. It is related by the apostle John with a simplicity of style, and the main circumstances attending it are told with a minuteness, and, at the same time, a brevity, that cannot but impress an unprejudiced mind. Had a person, who knew he was endeavouring to gain belief to an imposition which he had been concerned in contriving, given us this narrative, it would have been told in a very different manner. It would, probably, have been drawn out to a greater length. No particular mention would have been made of times, places, and persons; and

some affected ~~apologies~~ and colourings would have been introduced to give it a plausibility, and to guard against objections. But, instead of this, we find it a narrative plain and artless in the highest degree, without a circumstance that shows an attempt to give it any dress, or an expression that betrays a design to surprise and deceive. In short; the astonishing miracle, which is the subject of this narrative, is told us exactly as we should expect an honest but unlettered man, who had been familiarized to miracles, to relate a fact of this kind, to which he was conscious of having been an eye and ear witness.

It has been thought strange that the other evangelists have omitted to give us an account of this miracle. Several reasons have been assigned for this omission, which I will just mention to you.

It should be considered; that none of the evangelists appear to have aimed at giving us a complete account of all our Saviour's miracles. It should be considered further, that this miracle was performed in the interval of time between our Saviour's going into the country beyond Jordan, and his going up to his last passover; and that this was a more private part of his ministry, concerning which the other evangelists have said little. But what deserves most to be attended to is, that the evangelists must have felt a particular delicacy with respect to the publication of this miracle. First; because it was a miracle performed on a *friend* in a family with which our Saviour was intimate. And secondly; because Laza-

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rus might be still living at the time they wrote their gospels, and might be subjected to great inconveniences by having his name mentioned as the subject of such a miracle: This, however, was a reason which cannot be supposed to have existed when John wrote. There was a tradition among the Fathers, that *Lazarus* lived thirty years after his resurrection; and John did not write his gospel till at least forty or fifty years afterwards. *Lazarus*, therefore, most probably was not then alive; and John, for this reason, must have been more at liberty to give an account of his resurrection.

It seems proper further to mention here, that St. John, as he wrote last, wrote also on purpose to give a supplement to the other gospels. He had read these gospels; and finding that some important particulars were omitted in them, and others not fully enough related, he composed *his* gospel to supply their defects. John's gospel will appear particularly striking when viewed in this light. Whoever will compare it with the other gospels, must find that he is generally careful to avoid repeating accounts which the other evangelists had given before him; and that the bulk of it is a relation of facts and instructions about which they have been silent. The account I am now to consider is one instance of this. Though extremely short, considering the magnitude of the fact, it is given us more fully than most of the accounts of Christ's other miracles; and we cannot employ ourselves more profitably than in considering it.

What may be first worth your notice in this miracle

racle, is the character of the person on whom it was performed. Our Saviour had a particular affection for him. He calls him his *friend* in the 11th verse of this chapter, and the message which was sent him to acquaint him with his illness was expressed in these words; *Lord, Behold, he whom thou lovest is sick.* We may well believe, that a person who was thus distinguished must have been endued with some very amiable qualities. John tells us further, that he had two sisters, whose names were *Martba* and *Mary*; and that they lived together in a village called *Bethany*, within fifteen furlongs of Jerusalem. When Lazarus was taken ill, our Saviour was at a considerable distance from *Bethany*. It was natural for *Martba* and *Mary*, knowing the particular affection he had for their brother, to hope that he would exert those miraculous powers by which he had cured others, in recovering this his *friend*. They, therefore, sent to him to inform him of their brother's sickness, hoping that he would soon come to them, and give them relief. But, we are told, that, after receiving the message, he staid *two days* in the place where he was. The reason of this delay was, that he chose Lazarus should die before he got to *Bethany*, because he intended, for the fuller manifestation of his divine mission, to raise him from the dead. Had he been on the spot when Lazarus died, he would have suffered, perhaps, some troublesome importunities; nor, I think, would it

it have looked so well for him to have permitted Lazarus to die, while he was with him, and after that to raise him from the dead.

Secondly ; The HUMILITY which our Lord discovered on this occasion is worth our notice. After staying two days where he was when he received the account of Lazarus's sickness, he told his disciples that he was resolved to go into *Judea*, and invited them to go with him, informing them, at the same time, of the death of Lazarus. The words in which he gave this information are a little remarkable. Ver. 11. *Our friend Lazarus sleepeth, and I go to awake him out of sleep.* He does not say, *Lazarus is dead.* That would have been too harsh. Nor does he say ; *I go to raise him from the dead, and thus to display my great power.* A deceiver would, probably, have used some boasting language of this kind. But he, avoiding all ostentation, expresses himself in the gentlest and simplest language, saying only, " that Lazarus was *asleep*, and that he was going to *wake* him." Another circumstance, to the same purpose, is his ordering the stone to be removed from the mouth of the sepulchre, just before he ordered Lazarus to come forth. He might, undoubtedly, have commanded the stone to roll away of itself ; and, perhaps, a bold impostor would have been represented as doing this. But our Lord did not multiply miracles needlessly, or do any thing for the sake only of
show

show and parade. Again; the manner in which he refers this miracle to the will and power of God requires our attention. After the stone was taken away, he made, we are told, a solemn address to God; and, lifting up his eyes, said, *Father, I thank thee, that thou hast heard me.* This implies, that his ability to work this miracle was the consequence of his having prayed for it. Throughout his whole ministry he was careful to direct the regards of men to the Deity, as the fountain of all his powers. His language was; *The Father who dwelleth in me, he doeth the works. I can of mine own self do nothing. I came to do the will of him that sent me.*

Thirdly; We should take notice in the account of this miracle of the TENDERNESS and BENEVOLENCE of our Saviour's disposition. It is said, that when he saw Mary weeping, and the Jews also weeping, he groaned in his spirit, and was troubled. And it is added, as a circumstance particularly observable, that HE likewise wept. **JESUS WEPT.** Ver. 35. The remarks which, we are told, the spectators made on this, are very natural. Some, imagining that his tears flowed from his concern for the death of his friend, said, *Behold, how he loved him!* Others, wondering that, as Lazarus was his friend, he had not exerted the miraculous powers by which he had cured others in curing him, said; *Could not this man, who opened the eyes of the blind,*
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have caused that even this man should not have died?

Ver. 37. The reason of his weeping could not be his sorrow for the death of Lazarus; for he well knew that he should soon restore him to life; but, most probably, his sympathy with the sorrow of Lazarus's friends, heightened by reflections, to which on this occasion he might be led, on death and its attendant evils. He might, likewise, be much impressed (as we find he was at other times) by observing the perverseness discovered by some of the Jews who surrounded him, and by his foresight of the calamities that threatened them. We have an account of his weeping on another occasion in Luke xix. 41. where it is said, that when he came near to *Jerusalem* and beheld it, he *wept* over it. In these instances we see plainly the workings of an ardent benevolence; and we may infer from *them*, that it is by no means below the character of a wise man to be, on certain occasions, so far overcome by his affectionate feelings, as to be forced into tears. This happened to our Saviour on the occasions I have mentioned; and he only appears to us the more amiable for it. Wretched, indeed, is that philosophy which teaches us to suppress our tender feelings. Such a philosophy, by aiming at elevating us above human nature, sinks us below it. Our Saviour was greater than any human being; and yet we find that even he wept. How foolish then would it be in us to be ashamed of any similar

similar tenderness into which we may be forced ! A stoical insensibility is certainly rather a vice than a virtue. At no time does a person appear more lovely than when conquered by his kind affections, and melted by them into tears. Let us then learn to despise all pretensions to a wisdom which would take from us any of our natural sensibilities ; remembering, however, to keep them always, as far as we can, under proper restraint. It is neither a sin, nor a weakness, to fall into tears ; but it is wrong to weep like persons who have no hope, or who are not satisfied with God's will. Our passions have been wisely and kindly given us ; and our duty is, not to eradicate, but to regulate them, by so watching over them as never to suffer them to lead us into any excesses that would betray an impotence of mind, and a diffidence of Providence.

Fourthly ; The DIGNITY of Christ in working this miracle deserves our attention. How great did he appear in his conversation with Martha before he got to the sepulchre ; and, particularly, when he declared of himself that he was the RESURRECTION and the LIFE, and that *he who believeth in him, though he were dead, yet shall be live !* How great did he appear when, after addressing himself to the Deity, he cried out with a loud voice at the sepulchre, LAZARUS, COME FORTH ! And when, in consequence of this call, *Lazarus* immediately

awoke from death; and showed himself in perfect health; what a manifestation was this of his glory, and how evidently did it prove that the power of God dwelt in him!

But this leads me to desire you to attend to the assurance this miracle gives us of the divine mission of Christ. We can scarcely conceive a more wonderful exertion of power, than the instantaneous restoration to life and health of a person whose body was putrefying in the grave. He that did this must have been sent of God. It is wholly inconceivable, that a deceiver should be able to produce such credentials. It is only the power which gave life that can thus restore it, and reunite our souls and bodies after a separation. We may, therefore, assure ourselves, that the person who worked this miracle, and who possessed such an absolute command over nature as Christ discovered, was indeed what he declared himself to be, a Messenger from heaven to save mankind, and the great Messiah, whose coming had been promised from the beginning of the world.

It has been urged by unbelievers, that, granting the reality of miracles, they are no proof of the truth of doctrines, there being no connexion between a display of supernatural power and truth. The stress which unbelievers have laid on this objection is mere affectation. Did they believe the miracles, they would, whatever they pretend, find

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themselves

themselves under a necessity of receiving the doctrines of Christianity; and it will be time enough to answer this objection, when a man can be found not a lunatic, who can honestly say, that he believes the miracle in particular which is the subject of this discourse, but does not believe the doctrine which it was intended to prove.

But what deserves more particular notice here is, that it appears from this miracle, that Christ is hereafter to raise all mankind from death. Just before he performed it, *Martha* having said to him, *Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died,* he told her, in order to comfort her, that her brother should rise again. She, not understanding him, replied, *I know that he shall rise again at the resurrection at the last day;* to which he answered, with a voice of unspeakable dignity, *I am the RESURRECTION and the LIFE. He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die.* That is, "I am the person by whom mankind are to be raised from the dead. It signifies not whether he that is my true disciple is dead or alive. If he is *dead*, he shall live again; and if he is *alive*, his existence shall be continued to him beyond the grave, and his dismissal from this world shall be his introduction to a better world, where he shall never die."—After making this declaration, and to demonstrate the truth of

of it by giving a *specimen* of that power by which he was to effect the universal resurrection, he walked to Lazarus's grave, and raised him from the dead. What evidence could be more decisive? We have in the gospel-history accounts of his raising from the dead two other persons; and, after being crucified and buried, he rose himself from the dead, and ascended to heaven. These facts exhibit him to our senses as indeed the RESURRECTION and the LIFE. No doubt can remain of a doctrine thus proved. Give me leave to hold your attention here a little longer. In John v. 25. our Saviour, we are told, said to the Jews, *Verily, verily, I say unto you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live.* Soon after uttering these words he said again, as we read in the same chapter, verse 28. *The hour is coming when all that are in their graves shall hear the voice of the Son of Man, and shall come forth; they that have done good to the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil to the resurrection of damnation.*

In the circumstances which attended the resurrection of Lazarus, our Saviour seems to have referred to these declarations, and to have intended to verify and exemplify them. He cried, we are told, verse 43, with a loud voice, like, perhaps, to that by which he had said he would hereafter raise all the dead, LAZARUS, *come forth!* and in a

moment he did come forth. Thus will the whole world, at the last day, hear the voice of the Son of God. Thus will he then burst the bars of the grave, rescue from the king of terrors his prisoners, and call to life the dead of all nations, ranks, and times. How awful this prospect! How consoling and elevating to good men, amidst the waste that death is continually making around them! What reason have we to value our relation to that deliverer to whom, under God, it is owing! And how ought we to triumph in the assurance he has given us, that, though we must soon lose our powers in death, we shall hereafter recover them; spring up from the dust at his command, new-made and improved; and, with all the faithful, enter (not on such a life as that to which *Lazarus* was restored) but on a glorious and endless life in the heavens!

Before I proceed * I shall here request your attention, while I briefly consider the objections which unbelievers have made to the account given by St. John of this miracle. Sufficient notice has been already taken of several of these objections; but there are some which have not been mentioned, and on which it will not be improper to make a few remarks.

It has been asked, whether there is sufficient reason to believe, that *Lazarus* was really dead. The
answer

* Here this sermon was divided into two sermons.

answer is, that he died, not *suddenly*, but of an illness that increased gradually, and lasted several days; that, in this case, there is no danger of mistaking the signs of death; that his friends had buried him, and, therefore, must have assured themselves of his death; that he had been in his grave four days; and that, had he not been dead, the napkin which, we are told, was tied round his face, and the grave-clothes and filletings with which he was bound, would alone have been sufficient to kill him.

It has been further inquired, how, if he was bound hand and foot, as St. John tells us, he could, on our Saviour's call, come forth out of the grave. The answer is obvious. Upon the supposition of the reality of the miracle, there can be no difficulty in conceiving it carried so far, as not only to bring Lazarus to life, but to present him also out of the grave before the spectators. But were it necessary to suppose the miracle not carried thus far, the objection would deserve little regard, because founded on an ignorance of the manner of burying among the ancients. The graves among the Jews, and other nations in former times, were caves hewn out of rocks, in the sides of which the dead, after being embalmed, were deposited without coffins. When, therefore, by our Saviour's order, the stone was taken away from the mouth of Lazarus's sepulchre, it is possible that his corpse might

be exposed to view; and when it is said, that he *came forth bound band and foot*, the meaning may be, not, that he walked out of the sepulchre, but that he raised himself up in the side of the cave or bell where he was laid, and slid down from it upon his feet, and there continued till he was unbound and could walk about.

But the chief difficulty, which occurs in considering the account of this miracle, is the effect which, we are told, it had on the chief-priests and pharisees. Instead of being properly impressed by it, we read, verse 53, that, after taking counsel together, they determined to use all possible means to put Jesus to death. They even went so far as to think of measures for putting *Lazarus* himself to death. Similar to this, according to the gospel-history, was the general conduct of the leading Jews with respect to our Lord. Instead of being engaged by the increasing glory of his character, and the overpowering evidence of his miracles, to submit to him, they were only stimulated to greater rage, and made more desperate in their resolution to crush him: and this may seem a pitch of wickedness so diabolical as to exceed the limits of human depravity, and, therefore, to be incredible. I am in hopes, however, that you will think otherwise, when you have attended to the following observations.

It is a previous observation necessary to be attended to, that the Jewish rulers appeared to have been

been convinced of the supernatural power and prophetic character of our Lord. This the gospel-history plainly tells us. John xii. 42. *Among the chief rulers also many believed on him, but did not confess him, because they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God. We know,* says Nicodemus (the ruler who came to Jesus by night,) *that thou art a teacher come from God, for no one can do the miracles thou doest, except God be with him.* John iii. 2. On hearing the report of this miracle in particular, the language of the chief-priests and pharisees was; *What do we? for this man doth many miracles. If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him.* John xi. 47. When we read, that they did *not* believe in him, the meaning is, that they did not *receive* him and *submit* to him as a messenger from heaven; and what, therefore, is to be accounted for is, not so much their want of faith in him, as their rejection and persecution of him notwithstanding their faith.

In order to explain this, I would desire you to consider,

First, The general character of the Jews. In every age they had been infamous for their persecution of the prophets who were sent to them. About this time, more especially, it appears that they were arrived at a pitch of wickedness which went beyond common depravity. *Josepbus* says, "that he believed there never existed, from the begin-
ning

“ning of the world, a generation of men more
“profligate than the body of the Jewish leaders
“and nobility were at the time Jerusalem was be-
“sieged by the Romans :” And if they were then
so vicious, it is not likely they were of a different
character forty years before, when our Lord preached
to them.

Secondly ; The provocation our Lord gave them
should be considered. It is remarkable, that it does
not appear that he ever expressed himself with par-
ticular warmth except when he spake of these men.
Against the scribes and pharisees we find him al-
ways declaring a most pointed and irreconcilable
indignation. He charged them with being guilty
of almost every vice that could stain a human cha-
racter ; and, particularly, with religious hypocrisy,
doing all their good works to be seen of men ; pre-
tending uncommon sanctity, and making long
prayers, but devouring widows’ houses ; straining
at a gnat, but swallowing a camel ; careful not
to omit any punctilio of a ceremony, and paying
tithe of mint, anise, and cummin, but neglecting
the weightier matters of the law, justice, mercy,
and fidelity ; binding heavy burthens on others,
which they would not touch with one of their
fingers ; compassing sea and land to make one pro-
felyte, who, when made, became tenfold more a
child of hell than themselves ; claiming an abso-
lute authority over the consciences of the people,
while

while they taught for doctrines the commandments of men, and corrupted the law of God; loving greetings in the markets, and the chief seats in synagogues, and studying (by going about in long robes, praying in the corners of the streets, founding a trumpet when they gave alms, and enlarging the borders of their garments) to appear *outwardly* righteous, while *inwardly* they were like whited sepulchres, full of dead men's bones and of all uncleanness. In short, their character, according to our Lord's representation of it, was completely detestable; and, perhaps, the account we have of it has been providentially given us to prevent our wondering at the violence of their opposition to our Saviour, notwithstanding all they saw and knew of his miraculous powers. He even declared a preference to them of publicans and sinners, of thieves and harlots, who, he assured them, were more likely to enter into the kingdom of the Messiah than they were.

His discourse in the 23d chapter of Matthew is particularly worth your attention on this occasion. In this discourse he denounces the judgments of heaven upon them for their wickedness, calling them blind guides, and a generation of vipers who could not escape the damnation of hell. He pronounces seven times the words, **WOE UNTO YOU, SCRIBES AND PHARISEES, HYPOCRITES!** and concludes with saying, there was no remedy for them,

them, but that *on them would come all the righteous blood which had been shed from the beginning of the world*; that is, a punishment so dreadful as to bear to be so expressed. Thus did he hold them up to public detestation as enemies to the progress of truth and virtue, and a body of pious knaves destined to destruction: and the effect must have been the ruin of their credit and authority. Could there have been a provocation more intolerable? In truth, the wonder is, that they bore him so long as they did; and the probability is, that they would have brought him to a quicker end, had it not been for an awe produced in their minds by the splendour of his miracles, united to their apprehensions of danger from the people, who, we are informed, all took him for a prophet, and were ready for a revolt in his favour.

But let us further consider what they must have done, and how much they must have relinquished, had they submitted to him. They must have made themselves the disciples of the son of a carpenter, followed by twelve mean fishermen, without state or pomp, or even a place in which to lay his head. They must have descended from their seats of power and influence, and placed themselves under the direction of an enemy who had unmasked and exposed them, and from whom they could expect no mercy. But above all, they must have acknowledged themselves the wicked wretches he had declared them to be.

be, and given up their ambition, their hypocrisy, and their vices. Is it strange, that even miracle, whatever conviction they might extort, did not produce this effect? Perhaps; indeed, there is not *now* a country under heaven, in which, in similar circumstances, our Lord would not meet with similar treatment. Suppose, for instance, that in ITALY a prophet was to arise and to go about preaching repentance to the inhabitants; calling them from the worship of the host, of images, the virgin Mary, and the saints, to the worship of one God; reprobating popery as a system of superstition and spiritual fraud and domination, injurious to the essential interests of men, by teaching a way of being religious without being virtuous, and of getting to heaven without forsaking vice; and, at the same time, delivering woes against the public teachers and rulers, as hypocritical corrupters of true religion, as supporters of idolatry and falsehood, and enemies to the improvement and happiness of mankind. Suppose, I say, this now to happen in ITALY; what can you imagine would be the effect? What evidence would be sufficient to engage the pope, the cardinals, and the different orders of priests, to listen to such a preacher, and acknowledge his authority; to renounce their usurped honours and dignities; to give up the abuses to which they owed their wealth and their consequence, and to reform their doctrine and manners?

ners? Would not the whole force of clerical and civil power be exerted to silence and crush him as soon as possible? Would miracles themselves, unless employed for the purpose of protecting him, long preserve him? Would he be perfectly safe, even in *this* country, were he to come to us and to attack established corruptions, provoke the vicious in high places, and unmask religious prevaricators, the supporters of abuses, and the enemies of reformation, in the manner our Lord did in *Judæa*?

The observation I am now making has been verified by the experience of all past ages. Such is the power of criminal prejudices, and such the stubbornness and often the fury of vicious men interested in maintaining abuses, that reformers, however powerful their admonitions have been and eminent their characters, have seldom long escaped persecution and violent deaths. Provocations, unspeakably less than those given to the Jews by our Saviour, have every where produced the same effects; in *ATHENS*, the poisoning of *SOCRATES*; in *BRITAIN*, the burning of *CRANMER*, *LATIMER*, *RIDLEY*, &c.

But this is by no means all that is to be said in answer to the objection I am considering. In our Lord's circumstances with respect to the Jews, there was much that was peculiar, and that can never again exist in any country. In order to understand this, you must recollect, that all the Jews were,

in the time of our Saviour, eagerly and impatiently looking for the Messiah promised in their sacred writings; and that the only notion they had of this Messiah was*, that he would be a temporal prince and a great conqueror, who would come with a train of splendid courtiers and signs in the heavens, set himself at the head of a mighty army, deliver them from the Roman yoke, restore them to their long lost liberty, and elevate them to the sovereignty of the world. Their leading men, in particular, reckoned on being the most favoured men in his kingdom, on having their consequence among the people confirmed and enlarged, and enjoying in the greatest abundance pleasures, preferments, honours, and riches. When, therefore, they heard the fame of Jesus, and saw the displays of his supernatural power, they could not but be led to conclude that he might prove the Messiah, or, at least, that the nation would take him to be so; and, as he had avowed himself their adversary, this would necessarily alarm them. It was impossible they should not dislike *such* a Messiah; a Messiah who was continually warning the people against them,

* This opinion was not confined to the Jews. "There had been, Suetonius tells us (Vespas. cap. 4), **THROUGH ALL THE EAST**, an ancient and constant expectation; that at that time some one from *Judaea* should obtain the empire of the world."

and who had sunk their credit; a Messiah who made humility, self-denial, repentance, and heavenly-mindedness, the conditions of his favour; a Messiah who publicly threatened them, who had pronounced them the worst of mankind, and declared that, instead of sharing in the happiness of the Messiah's reign, they would be excluded from it, become victims of divine justice, and suffer a punishment sharper than any that had been ever inflicted.

It is true that, with wonderful prudence, he avoided declaring himself the Messiah. The effect of such a declaration would have been producing tumults; which must have defeated his views. The proper time for this was after his departure from this world, when it would be impossible to mistake it for a call to rebellion. But the rulers of the Jews must have expected that he would soon quit his reserve, publish his pretensions, and set up his standard; and the more he distinguished himself, the more they must have apprehended that he might do this with a success that (either by enabling him to execute his threats, or by bringing the Roman power upon them) would occasion their ruin. Thus circumstanced, every miracle he wrought, every testimony he received of popular favour, and every display he made of his prophetic character, could, in their depraved minds, have no other effect than to increase their animosity, to work them up to greater violence,

violence, and to render them more desperate in their attempts to provide for their own security by destroying him.

Our Lord's parable of the vineyard let out to unfaithful husbandmen, delivered not long before his crucifixion, affords a particular confirmation of these observations. In this parable he intimates to the chief priests and elders of the people, that in spite of all their efforts he should rise to universal power; and that the consequence would be, his falling upon them (like a great corner-stone) and grinding them to powder. And we are told that they understood his meaning, and were so exasperated by it, that they endeavoured immediately to seize him, but were deterred by the people. See the xxist chapter of Matthew, from the 25th verse to the end.

In short; Jesus, after raising *Lazarus* from the dead, became possessed of an influence among the people, which would, had he availed himself of it, have been irresistible. They * were ripened by it for an insurrection, and the slightest encouragement
would

* The disposition of the Jews, at this time, to rise in favour of every pretender who offered himself to them as the temporal deliverer they expected in the Messiah, is well known. It was this chiefly, as Josephus says, that produced the war which ruined them; and it was our Lord's disappointing their views, by refusing to be made a king, and suffering
himself

would have brought them together to fight under him, and to proclaim him their great Messiah. The hypocrites, whom, in the tone and with the authority of a prophet sent from God, he had *proscribed*, could not observe this without terror. Their danger appeared to be increasing with every increase of his popularity, and growing more imminent in proportion to the proofs he gave of his divine mission. They could not but reckon, that as he rose they must sink; and that either *he* or *they* must perish. This produced a contest singular and unparalleled. Our Lord gave it up by yielding to their power. It was a great mistake to think, that his kingdom was a temporal kingdom, or that he had any worldly views. He did not come for slaughter and triumph like the savage conquerors of this world, but to suffer and to die;

himself to be taken and condemned, that made the people turn at last against him.

"The Jewish people," says Dr. Lardner in his *Collection of Jewish and Heathen Testimonies to the Truth of Christianity*, chap. iii. sect. 7. "had met with many disappointments from our Lord; and yet, when he entered into Jerusalem in no greater state than riding on an ass, they accompanied him with loud acclamations, saying, *Hosanna to the son of David! Blessed is the king who cometh in the name of the Lord!* And Jesus' not assuming then the character of an earthly prince was a fresh disappointment to them, and left deep resentments."

die; and it was necessary that his death should be a public death. His own resurrection (the ground of all human hope) could not otherwise have been properly ascertained. He, therefore, made a voluntary surrender of himself to his enemies; and, to fulfil the counsels of providence*, submitted to be publicly condemned and crucified.

These observations seem to be a full answer to the objection I have stated: and they explain what is said in *Mat. xxvii. 18.* that it was from ENVY the

* Their success in taking and condemning him led them to conclude they had obtained a complete victory over him, and had delivered themselves from the danger with which he had threatened them. But the events which soon followed proved the contrary. He rose to all power in heaven and earth; and, in a few years after this, sent his armies to destroy these murderers. Vengeance came upon them to the uttermost; and his prophetic denunciations were fully verified. *Josephus* tells us that twelve thousand of the Jewish nobility perished at the siege of *Jerusalem*; that the vengeance of heaven appeared plainly to be upon them; and that, in his opinion, all the calamities which had ever happened to any people from the beginning of the world were not to be compared with those which befel the Jews at this time. Multitudes, he says, were crucified by the Romans before the walls; and so great was the number of those who thus suffered, that room was wanting for staves, and crosses were wanting for bodies.

chief priests and pharisees had delivered him, *that is, from a jealousy of his popularity, and a dread of its effects; and, also, what we are told (in a passage already quoted) these chief priests said, on hearing of the resurrection of Lazarus, What do we? for this man doth many miracles. If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and nation. John xi. 47, 48.*

There are two reflections which are naturally suggested to us by these observations.

First; We should consider how striking a proof they give us of the truth of our religion. Had Christ been a deceiver, he would have fallen in with the prejudices of his countrymen; he would have offered himself to them as just the Messiah they expected and wanted: for it was only in the scheme of such a Messiah the views of a deceiver could be gratified. He would have endeavoured to ingratiate himself with the chief priests and rulers, encouraged their ambition, and flattered their vices. You have heard how differently he acted; how he provoked instead of soothing the Jewish rulers, and threatened instead of flattering them; and thus made himself odious and terrible to them in the highest degree. There cannot be a stronger argument for his divine mission. If there be any person who does not feel the weight of it, he must be either very much prejudiced, or very inattentive.

Secondly; We are led, by the observations I have

have made, to reflect on the wisdom of divine providence, in ordering the circumstances which attended the introduction of christianity into the world. Had the body of the Jewish leaders and priests (and consequently the nation in general) received Christ, the evidences of our religion would have been much diminished; a suspicion would have been unavoidable, that it was an imposition contrived by the Jews, and which had made its way in the world by the power and policy * of the Jewish state.

But

* “ Had the great body of your nation, and especially the rulers of it in the time of Christ, embraced christianity, as it was a religion which sprang up among yourselves, it would have been said at this day, that it was a contrivance of those who had it in their power to impose upon the common people, and to make them believe whatever they pleased, and that your scriptures, which bear testimony to Christ, had been altered to favour the imposture. Whereas the violent opposition which your nation in general, and the rulers of it, made to christianity, will for ever put it out of the power of unbelievers to say that it was a scheme which the founders of it carried on in concert with any human powers.” See the Letters addressed to the Jews by *Dr. Priestley*, in which, with a force of persuasion they ought to feel, he invites them to an amicable discussion with him of the evidences of christianity. Fifth Letter, p. 45.

But I have gone far beyond the bounds I intended in speaking on this subject.

Let us now pause a moment, and endeavour to bring back our thoughts to the resurrection of *Lazarus*. Never, except when Jesus himself rose from the dead, was a scene so interesting exhibited on the stage of this world. The consideration of it should engage us to exercise faith in Christ as our Saviour, and to rely on his power to deliver us from the all-devouring grave. His exhortation to his apostles just before his last sufferings was; *Ye believe in God: Believe also in me*. Thus also, in his words, would I now exhort you. “Ye believe in God.” He is the ONE SUPREME, and the cause of all the causes of your happiness. “But believe also in Christ.” He is the one mediator, and the chosen minister of God’s goodness to you. *As in Adam all die; so in him shall all be made alive*. 1 Cor. xv. 22. Soon he will descend again from heaven, not to labour and suffer, but to gather the fruits of his labours and sufferings; not to die, but to destroy death, and to change these our vile bodies, that they may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to that mighty power by which he is able to subdue all things to himself. Phil. iii. 21. *As the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself*. John v. 26. We have been contemplating a striking proof of this. As his call brought Lazarus to life; so will it, hereafter, bring to life you

you and me and all mankind. At his coming *the sea shall give up the dead that are in it, and death and the invisible state shall give up the dead that are in them. He shall sit on the throne of his glory, and before him shall be gathered all nations to be judged according to their works. He shall separate them as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats. The righteous he shall place on his right-hand; the wicked on his left. To the former he will say; Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world! To the latter, Go, ye cursed, into everlasting fire!* God grant, fellow-christians, that we may be prepared for this solemn time! A step more may bring us to it. Death is pressing hard towards us; and when it comes, the curtain will drop which hides from our view another world, and these scenes will open upon us. The intervening time of lying amongst the dead our imaginations are apt greatly to misrepresent. There may be, to our perceptions, no difference whether it be four days, as in the case of Lazarus, or a thousand ages. Let us then be steadfast in every good purpose, never, while in the way of our duty, desponding under any troubles, or weeping as without hope, forasmuch as we know that our Redeemer liveth, and will stand at the latter day on the earth; and that though our bodies must putrefy in the ground, and worms devour them, yet in our flesh we shall see God. Job xiii. 26.

And

And now, before I dismiss you, let me desire you to join with me in taking one more view of what passed at Lazarus's grave: It is pleasing in the highest degree to set before our imaginations that scene. Christ declares himself the resurrection and the life, and then walks to the grave. In his way to it (observing the sorrow of Lazarus's friends, and reflecting on the calamities of human nature) he falls into tears. When arrived at it, he orders the stone at the mouth of it to be taken away; and (in answer to Martha, who objected that the smell would be offensive) he says, that if she believed, she should see the glory of God. He solemnly addresses the Deity, and thanks him for hearing him: the spectators stand around, big with expectation. He cries with a loud voice, *Lazarus, come forth!* Immediately he came forth, and showed himself alive. Conceive, if you can, the astonishment this produced. Think, particularly, of the emotions of Lazarus's friends. What delight must they have felt! How joyful must it have been to Martha and Mary to receive their beloved brother from the dead! With what ecstasies must they have embraced him, and welcomed him to the light of life! How, probably, did they fall down before Jesus in gratitude and wonder!

But let not our thoughts stop here. Let us carry them on to the morning of the universal resurrection. What happened now was a faint resemblance of what

will happen then. How gladly will virtuous men open their eyes on that morning, and hail the dawning of an endless day ! With what rapture will they then meet, congratulate one another on their escape from danger and trouble, and unite their voices in praising their Deliverer ! What will be their joy to exchange corruption for incorruption, and weakness for power ; to take leave of sin and sorrow, and lose all their maladies ; to throw off their fetters, recover perfect health and liberty, mount up on high to *meet the Lord in the air*, and draw immortal breath !

Oh ! blessed period ! Come, Lord Jesus ! come quickly ! And when thy voice shall hereafter awake all the dead, may we find this happiness ours, and be taken, with all we have loved here, to live with thee for ever !

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S E R M O N IV.

THE IMPORTANCE AND EXTENT OF FREE INQUIRY IN MATTERS OF RELIGION.

[Preached November 5, 1785.]

MATT. xiii. 9.

HE THAT HATH EARS TO HEAR LET HIM
HEAR.

IN these words our Lord several times addressed his audience, in order to summon their utmost attention to his doctrine. It was a call to make use of their reason, in a case in which it was of the greatest consequence to apply it, and in ~~which~~ they were likewise capable of applying it with the greatest effect, viz. the investigation of religious truth. *Hear and understand* is another of his modes of calling the attention of his audience to the instruction that he gave them. And when he thought them deficient in their attention to his doctrine, and they did not appear to understand what he laid before them, he was not backward even in his reproaches on that account. *Are ye yet also without understanding? Do ye not yet understand?* His language that he

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once

once made use of; evidently implying some degree of surprize and displeasure. Matt. xv. 16, 17. And even in a case of considerable difficulty, viz. the right application of scripture prophecies, he said to the two disciples going to Emmaus, *O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken!* Luke xxiv. 25.

The apostles continued the same earnest addresses to the reason of their converts; and Paul, in particular, gave the greatest exercise to the understandings of his hearers and readers, by very abstruse argumentation on subjects relating to religion. His epistles to the Romans, to the Galatians, and to the Hebrews, are chiefly argumentative; and those to the Corinthians, and some others, are very much so. For, after the death of our Saviour, new cases had occurred, and new difficulties had arisen, for which the instructions he had given them were not sufficient. And had the apostles continued to live to the present day, other cases would, no doubt, have occurred, in which their own reasoning powers, and those of their disciples, would have found continual exercise.

Indeed, it seems to be the design of providence that the present state should be a theatre of constant exercise and discipline, and that not of our passions only, but also of our understandings, that we may make continual advances in knowledge, as well as in virtue; to prepare us, no doubt, for our proper sphere

sphere of action in a future world; in which, we may assure ourselves, we shall find abundant exercise, as for the moral virtues that we acquire here, so also for that habit of patient inquiry, and close investigation of truth, and likewise that candour with respect to those that differ from us, which it is our duty to acquire and cultivate here below.

Man is a creature whose distinguishing excellence is the reason which God has given him, no less than his capacity for moral virtues. The perfection of man, therefore, must consist as well in the improvement of his reason, and the acquisition of knowledge, as in the attainment of all moral virtue. We should then always keep our attention awake to every interesting subject of discussion; and, whenever religious truth is directly or indirectly concerned, imagine that we hear our Saviour himself calling out to us, and saying, *He that bath ears to hear let him hear.*

The subject of *free inquiry*, I am well aware, is a very trite one, and especially as one of the usual topics of the fifth of November, on which it is customary to call the attention of protestants to the use of their reason in matters of religion, in order to vindicate the principles of the reformation; and also further to assert our liberty of dissenting from the established religion of this country. This has been done so often that many persons may think it a worn-out and useless topic. They may think

that the reformation has been abundantly vindicated, and that now we have nothing to do but to rejoice in that liberty in which the exertions of our ancestors, and the favour of divine providence, have made us free. Dissenters also may think the principles of their dissent from the establishment of their country sufficiently vindicated, and that now we have nothing to do but joyfully to acquiesce in our greater liberty; only being ready to oppose all attempts that may be made to encroach upon it.

This, however, is the language of those who think they have acquired all useful religious knowledge; whereas it is probable that this will never be the situation of man, not even in a future world, and much less in this. In nature we see no bounds to our inquiries. One discovery always gives hints of many more, and brings us into a wider field of speculation. Now, why should not this be, in some measure, the case with respect to knowledge of a moral and religious kind? Is the compass of religious knowledge so small, as that any person, however imperfectly educated, may comprehend the whole, and without much trouble? This may be the notion of such as read or think but little on the subject. But of what value can such an opinion be?

If we look back into ecclesiastical history (which is itself a study no less useful than it is immense, and despised by none but those who are ignorant of

it), we shall see that every age, and almost every year, has had its peculiar subjects of inquiry. As one controversy has been determined, or sufficiently agitated, others have always arisen; and I will venture to say there never was a time in which there were more, or more interesting objects of discussion before us, than there are at present. And it is vain to flatter ourselves with the prospect of seeing an end to our labours, and of having nothing to do but to sit down in the pleasing contemplation of all religious truth, and reviewing the intricate mazes through which we have happily traced the progress of every error.

If, indeed, we confine ourselves to things that are *necessary to salvation*, we may stop whenever we please, and may even save ourselves the trouble of any inquiry, or investigation at all: because nothing is absolutely necessary to acceptance with God, and future happiness, in some degree, besides the conscientious practice of the moral duties of life. *What doth the Lord thy God require of thee but to do justice, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?* But, certainly, we may mislead ourselves if we restrict our inquiries by this rule, as, according to it, christianity itself may be said to be unnecessary: for do any of us think that a virtuous heathen will not be saved? Paul says that they who are without the law of Moses shall be judged without that law. They have the law of

nature and of conscience, and will be judged by that. But, notwithstanding this, he thought it a great privilege to be a Jew, and a greater still, as it certainly is, to be a christian; and there were questions relating to christianity, to which he thought it proper to give his own closest attention, and to invite the attention of others. The manner in which he addresses the Galatians, the Corinthians, and the christians of other churches, on the subject of *false doctrine*, is equal in point of energy with the language of our Saviour, *be that bath ears to hear let him hear*; and that of the apostle John, in whose time error had spread wider, and taken deeper root, is still stronger. Do not these great examples then justify the most vigilant attention that we can now give to the purity of christian doctrine?

As new errors and mistakes are continually arising, it is of importance that these be corrected, even to keep the ground that we have already got; and it may well be presumed that the great corruption in doctrine, discipline, and worship, which began in the very age of the apostles, and which kept advancing for the space of near fourteen hundred years afterwards, may furnish matter for the laborious and spirited inquiries of a later period than ours. We have seen, indeed, the *dawn* of a reformation, but much remains to the light of *perfect day*; and there is nothing that we can now allege

lege as a plea for discontinuing our researches, that might not have been said with equal plausibility at the time by Wickliff, by Luther, or by later reformers, who stopped far short of the progress which you who now hear me have made. We think that they all left the reformation very imperfect, and why may not our posterity think the same concerning us? What peculiar right have we to say to the spirit of reformation, *So far shalt thou go and no further.*

Luther and Calvin reformed many abuses, especially in the discipline of the church, and also some gross corruptions in doctrine; but they left other things, of far greater moment, just as they found them. They disclaimed the worship of saints and angels, but they retained the worship of Jesus Christ, which led the way to it, which had the same origin, and which is an equal infringement of the honour due to the supreme God, who has declared that he will not give his glory to another. Nay, the authority of the names of those reformers, who did not see this and other great errors, now serves to strengthen and confirm them: for those doctrines of original sin, predestination, atonement, and the divinity of Christ, which deserve to be numbered among the grossest of all errors, are even often distinguished by the appellation of *the doctrines of the reformation*, merely because they were not reformed by those who have
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got the name of *the reformers*; as if no others could have a right to it but themselves; whereas, excepting the doctrine of *atonement* (which in its full extent was an error that originated with the reformers themselves, who were led into it by an immoderate opposition to the popish doctrine of merit), they are, in fact, the doctrines of the church of Rome, which Luther and Calvin left just as they found.

It was great merit in them to go so far as they did, and it is not *they*, but *we* who are to blame, if their authority induce us to go no further. We should rather imitate them in the boldness and spirit with which they called in question and rectified so many long-established errors; and, availing ourselves of their labours, make further progress than they were able to do. Little reason have we to allege their name, authority, and example, when they did a great deal, and we do nothing at all. In this we are not imitating *them*, but those who opposed and counteracted them, willing to keep things as they were, among whom many were excellent characters, whose apprehensions at that day were the very same with those of many very good and quiet persons at present, viz. the fear of *moving foundations*, and overturning christianity itself. Their fears, we are now all sensible, were groundless; and why may not those of the present age be so too?

Dissenters, who have no creeds dictated to them
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by any civil governors, have, nevertheless, at this day no less need of such admonitions as these than members of established churches; because they may have acquired as blind an attachment to the systems in which they were educated as the members of any establishment whatever, and may be as averse to any further improvement. Indeed a similar temper is necessarily produced in similar circumstances, while human nature is the same in us all; and therefore a person educated a dissenter may be as much a *bigot* as any person educated a churchman, or a papist; and if he now be what he was brought up to, the probability certainly is, that, had he been educated differently, his prejudices would have been no less strong, though intirely different; so that the rigid dissenter would have been as rigid a papist or a churchman.

No person whose opinions are not the result of his own serious inquiry can have a right to say that he is a dissenter, or any thing else, *on principle*; and no man can be absolutely sure of this, whose present opinions are the same with those that he was taught, though he may think, and be right in thinking, that he sees sufficient reason for them, and retains them on conviction. This, however, is all that can be expected of any man; for it would be most absurd for a man to adopt new opinions, opinions entertained by no person besides himself, merely for the sake of proving that he has actually thought for himself.

himself. But still, thinking as others have thought, and for reasons which others have given, is no *proof* of a man having thought for himself, and therefore will not authorize his censuring of others. Such a person *may* have the true spirit of inquiry, he may have exerted it, and have found the truth; but he is incapable of giving that satisfactory *evidence* of it, which can be given by one, whose present sentiments are different from those in which he was educated, and which he could not have learned but from his own researches.

How few then of those of you who were educated dissenters can have a right to say, that you would have been dissenters if you had not been so educated! It is more than I would presume to say concerning myself. If those persons who now dislike the spirit of innovation were to go back in history, and place themselves in every age of reformation; still censuring that spirit which always gave offence in its day (being always the rebellion of a *few* against the authority of *the many*); they could not stop till they came to the heathenism of our barbarous ancestors: for it was the bold spirit of inquiry that made them christians.

Let all those who acquiesce in any system in which they were educated, or which they have learned from others, consider that, in censuring more modern innovators, they are censuring the *spirit* and *example* of the very persons whose opinions they

they have adopted, and of whose name they make their boast; and that if it had not been for that very spirit which they now censure, only exerted a century or two ago, their own opinions would have been very different from what they now are. They ought, therefore, to respect the *principle*, even though it should lead some into error. If the spirit of inquiry that carries some to socinianism be wrong, that which carries others to arianism is no less so; and if Arminius is to be condemned for abandoning the doctrine of Calvin, Calvin himself must be condemned for abandoning the doctrines of popery. It is the *spirit of inquiry*, which if error be established necessarily leads to *innovation*, that every man, who ranks himself with any class of christians now existing, must commend in some person or other: and if it was really commendable in the person, whose opinions he adopts, it cannot be censurable in the person, whose opinions he does not choose to adopt. The same spirit of inquiry is in itself equally commendable, or equally censurable in all, and whether it lead to truth, or to error.

It will be said, Is it not possible for the spirit of inquiry and innovation to be carried too far? Does liberty never degenerate into licentiousness? Admitting this, who is the proper judge in the case, when all are equally *parties*? The papist will say that the protestant has gone too far, the calvinists will say that the arminians are to blame, arminians will
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condemn the arians, and the arians the unitarians, and even some unitarians may condemn those of their body, who, differing from them in some respects, have not as yet got, but may hereafter get, some other name.

In fact, there is no reason to be alarmed at all in the case. Truth will always have an infinite advantage over error, if free scope be given to inquiry. It is very little advantage that any superiority of ability can give to the cause of error, and it cannot be of long continuance; not to say that the probability must always be, that a man of superior ability will discover the truth sooner than one of inferior talents; industry, and all other qualities being equal between them.

But the consideration that will perhaps contribute most to allay the apprehensions of serious and well-intentioned persons, with respect to all theological controversies, is, that nothing on which future happiness depends is concerned in any of them. Much more than has yet been called in question may be given up without abandoning christianity; and every thing that has yet been done towards stripping our religion of its foreign incumbrances has contributed to make many value it the more, and consequently, by giving it a firmer hold on men's understanding and belief, tends to give it a greater influence over their affections and practice.

There are, likewise, some other considerations, by means of which those persons who are not themselves

selves much given to speculation; and who are apt to be alarmed by the suggestions of others, may relieve themselves from the fears they entertain on these occasions. One is, that no principle or tenet is really dangerous that does not affect men's belief in the righteous moral government of God, and a state of rewards and punishments hereafter; because this is that religious principle which has the greatest influence on the conduct of men. Other principles, indeed, have an effect, in contributing to make us regard our governor and judge, and the maxims of his administration, with more satisfaction, and therefore may make religious obedience more pleasing, and they deserve our zeal and attachment on that account. Other principles again tend to make our religion approve itself to the reason of mankind, by removing from it what is manifestly absurd, or highly improbable and revolting; and therefore may recommend christianity to those who are at present prejudiced against it, and they deserve a large portion of our zeal on that account. But still the great thing, with respect to the professor of christianity himself, is his firm belief in a righteous moral government, and a future state of retribution; because these are the things that chiefly influence men's conduct.

In reality, there cannot be any better rule of judging in this case than that of our Saviour, *By their fruits ye shall know them.* Consider then the

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temper and conduct of those persons whose opinions are said to be dangerous. Are they worse than other persons? Have they less piety towards God; or less good-will to men, or are they more indulgent to their appetites and passions? If this cannot be said of them, but on the contrary their conduct be as unexceptionable, and exemplary, as that of other christians, assure yourselves that there is no more real danger in their principles than in those of others. They cannot be bad principles with which men lead godly, righteous, and sober lives.

I do not, however, desire you to be determined by the observation of a single person, or of a few persons; because there may be causes of their good conduct independent of their principles, as there may be causes of bad conduct in those who hold good principles. But observe the general character of the sect, or denomination, whose principles are censured; and if it be not worse than that of others, assure yourselves that, whatever may be the vices or virtues of individuals, the general principles of the sect are not more unfavourable to virtue than those of other christians; and, therefore, that there is nothing in them that ought to give you any alarm.

But if, independent of practical consequences, you consider speculative principles only, and all your fears be for *Christianity*, it should be considered

sidered, that every man is a christian who believes the divine mission of Christ, and consequently the truth of his religion. And, for the reason given before, the only essential article of his religion is the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead. Who Christ himself is, personally considered, is not, of itself, of any consequence, but only whether he be sufficiently authorized by the *God of truth* to teach what he did teach in his name. If such doctrines be taught concerning Christ, personally considered, as men of sense will not readily believe; if it be insisted on that he is Almighty God, the maker of the world, or any thing else that will seem to be either impossible, or highly improbable (by which many persons may be indisposed to receive christianity, and especially the great bodies of jews and mahometans, who keep strictly to that most important doctrine of the *unity of God*), every rational Christian ought on that account, as well as others, to exert himself to refute such notions, and to prevent the spread of them. But still we ought to bear in mind, that any man is intitled to the appellation of a *christian*, who believes that Christ (whether he was himself God, or man, or something between God and man,) had a commission from God, that he died and rose again; and who, in consequence of it, expects a general resurrection, and a life of retribution to come.

But should free inquiry lead to the destruction

of christianity itself, it ought not on that account to be discontinued : for we can only wish for the prevalence of christianity on the supposition of its being *true* ; and if it fall before the influence of free inquiry, it can only do so in consequence of its not being true. But every man who is himself a serious believer in christianity must have the most perfect confidence in its truth. He can have no doubt of its being able to stand the test of the most rigorous examination, and consequently he can have no motive to be unwilling to submit it to that test. None can well be enemies to free inquiry but those who, not believing christianity, or at least strongly suspecting that it may not be true, yet wish to support it for some private and interested considerations ; like those who lived by the trade of making shrines for the goddess Diana, who were interested in the support of her worship at all events, whether they themselves believed in her divinity or not, because by *that craft they got their wealth*. But this is an argument that cannot much affect any besides members of civil establishments of religion. You, my brethren, have no interest whatever in the support of christianity, if it be false ; and your ministers very little. We, therefore, as dissenters, shall be absolutely inexcusable, if we be not friends to free inquiry in its utmost extent, and if we do not give the most unbounded scope to the use of our reason in matters of religion.

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It is the great principle on which our cause rests, and without which it can never be worth supporting at all.

By all means, then, be so far consistent, as christians, as protestants, and as dissenters, as to give the greatest encouragement to free inquiry in matters of religion. Do you, who have leisure and capacity, study the subject of religion, the nature of its evidences, and every circumstance relating to it. No subjects of inquiry or speculation, within the reach of the human faculties, are so great and interesting as those which, in the most distant manner, relate to the revelation of the will of God to men, respecting our conduct here, and our expectations hereafter. The ultimate object of the whole scheme gives a dignity to comparatively little things belonging to it; and no studies are in their nature capable of becoming more pleasing and satisfying to the mind than those of theology. For this I may venture to appeal to the experience of all those who, in consequence of having a taste for these studies as well as others, and of having made real proficiency in both, are the only competent judges in the case. Their being the chosen studies of Newton and Locke, for the greater and more valuable part of their lives, clearly shows that they considered them as superior to those of mathematics and natural philosophy in the one case, and of metaphysics and various other liberal pursuits, in

the other. Compared with this testimony, so emphatically given, by the actual employment of their time, how contemptible is the opinion of men whose studies have been confined to polite literature, natural science, or that of men of the world, who cannot pretend to any knowledge of the subject on which they pass their hasty censures! You who have fortune, but little leisure or capacity for such inquiries yourselves, at least encourage them in others. Give assistance to their labours, and you will have a better right to enjoy the fruits of them, though you may not be qualified, in any other respect, to contribute to their success.

Do you, in general, who are private members of christian societies, be, at least, so far the friends of free inquiry, as to throw no obstructions in the way of it. Allow your ministers the liberty that you take yourselves, and take no umbrage if, in consequence of giving more attention to matters of theology than you have leisure for, they should entertain opinions different from yours, provided that your agreement on the whole be such, as that their services are useful and edifying to you. After a laborious and hazardous course of inquiry, of the difficulties of which you can hardly be aware, it is no great hardship upon you to give them at least a dispassionate and attentive hearing. They cannot force any opinions upon you. You will still have the power of judging for yourselves; and without
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hearing you cannot have even the means of forming a right judgment. And where an agreement cannot be had (and few persons who really think for themselves will agree in *all* things), you may exercise that mutual candour, which is of more value than any agreement in speculation.

If your ministers be men of sense, and have any knowledge of human nature, they will not trouble you, from such a place as this, with speculations into which you cannot enter, or the discussion of questions that are not of some importance to our common christianity. But you may easily suppose, that, giving more attention to speculative religion than you have leisure to do, they may see the importance of certain articles in a stronger light than you will at first be aware of; and that will justify them to themselves, and ought to justify them to you, if they propose those articles with such evidence as strikes their minds in their favour, and with a zeal which they may think they deserve. It is indeed their duty, in the sight of God, to inculcate upon you whatever they shall think to be of importance to you, as members of christian societies, whether you receive it well or ill.

There are many things which they may think to be highly interesting in *speculation*, and proper for your consideration in your closets, which they would not think of proposing promiscuously from the pulpit, not being of sufficient importance, and the
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minds of all not being sufficiently prepared for them. But there are some errors of a speculative nature, such as those respecting the unity of God, and the equity of his moral government, which have taken deep root among common christians, and which are perpetually inculcated from other pulpits, with respect to which it becomes us to oppose zeal to zeal; and every man who has *ears to hear* should be called upon to *bear and understand*, because every man who has ears to hear, and the most common understanding, may be made to see the absurdity and the mischievous consequences of such doctrines. The minds, therefore, of the commonest people ought to be enlightened, and their zeal excited, with respect to them. Let it appear that we, as well as others, despise what we think to be despicable, and abhor what we think to be shocking.

Let those, on the other hand, who are bold in speculation, bear with those who are not so, especially those who are in years, and who have not been much in the habit of diligent inquiry. God does not give the same disposition to every man; nor indeed does the purpose of his providence admit of it. Long prejudices are also always, or at least generally, to be treated with tenderness. Besides, as it is happy for the cause of truth that *some* should be forward in speculation, it is no less happy that others should be backward to receive new opinions;

as, in consequence of this, every thing is more thoroughly canvassed, and it is only after a due course of discussion, in which every objection shall be brought forth, that there can be any probability that the reception of any truth will be lasting. A truth that has never been opposed cannot acquire that firm and unwavering assent, which is given to that which has stood the test of a rigorous examination.

As we call upon every man that has *ears to hear*, that is, *ability to judge*, we must be prepared patiently to bear with the result of that judgment, whatever it be. If we invite examination and discussion, we should take the consequences of it, without complaining. If the cause for which we contend be a good one, it will stand its ground; and if otherwise, we ourselves ought to rejoice in the fall of it.

To conclude, whether in searching after truth, or in judging of it, let us give one another all the aid and assistance that we can; remembering that we are all frail and fallible creatures, liable to mistakes, and to faults more dangerous than any mistakes. Let it, therefore, be our greatest care to *provoke unto love and to good works, to exhort one another daily, while it is called to-day, lest any of us be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.*

With respect to *opinions*, the time is coming that will try every man's work what it is, whether we
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are now building upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets with suitable and durable materials, or such as will not bear the fire. And, with respect both to speculation and practice, let it be our great object so to acquit ourselves here below, in the absence of our Lord, that, when he shall return and take an account of his servants, we may be found of him without spot and blameless, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.

REFLECTIONS ON THE PRESENT STATE OF
FREE INQUIRY IN THIS COUNTRY.

I PUBLISH the preceding discourse in part to oblige those before whom it was delivered; but chiefly because I do not think that the generality of even the more liberal-minded christians in this country have as yet given sufficient attention to the sentiments inculcated in it. This I perceive by the alarm that has been taken at some free but important discussions in the last volume of the *Theological Repository*. It was a willingness to convince such persons how groundless were the apprehensions they have expressed on this subject, that led me to the train of thought which runs through this discourse; though it will be perceived, that I had likewise a view to another class of persons, who despise all such discussions as those which I now allude to.

It has been too much the disposition of all christians to imagine that those who think a little more freely than themselves are ready to abandon christianity itself, together with their peculiar notions concerning it. They are so fully persuaded that their own opinions are contained in the scriptures, that they cannot separate the idea of renouncing the one from that of renouncing the other. But
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a little observation and reflection on what has passed of a similar nature might satisfy them, that their apprehensions have no solid foundation; their own peculiar notions not having, in reality, that necessary connexion with christianity which they imagine them to have, from not considering how few the essentials of christianity are.

From want of distinguishing essentials from non-essentials, the roman-catholics have thought that there can be no christianity besides their own; and too many of the several sects of protestants think the same with respect to their several tenets. Many arians (themselves held in abhorrence by athanasians) have said that they could not consider socinians as christians; and some are now unreasonably apprehensive that those who disbelieve the miraculous conception, or the plenary inspiration of Christ and his apostles in cases with respect to which the object of their mission did not require inspiration, are in danger of rejecting christianity; though they are as firm believers in the divine mission of Christ (which alone properly constitutes a christian) as themselves. This is the more extraordinary, as the doctrine of the plenary inspiration of the scriptures is, I believe, universally disclaimed by all who are called rational christians. But of what use is it to give up that doctrine, if we are never to avail ourselves of our opinion with respect to it, and do not thereby find ourselves at liberty to examine.

amine with perfect freedom narratives and reasonings which are confessedly not infallible, and in which therefore there may be mistakes? Besides, it is an allowed maxim with us, that the fewer blemishes of any kind we leave in our religion, the greater service we render it. But it is no uncommon thing to admit general *principles*, and yet startle at the natural and necessary *consequences* of them.

I am sensible that the present times are in more respects than one unfavourable to theological discussions. Very many, of whom better things might be expected, are averse to them; thinking them altogether useless, or perhaps dangerous. They are persuaded that their own opinions (which they have adopted without giving themselves much trouble about the matter) are perfectly rational, that the truth of them must be admitted, whenever they are fairly proposed to the mind, and that all we have to do is to apply them to their proper practical uses; and to the inculcating of these they would have all discourses from the pulpit, and from the press too, to be confined.

A great majority of every denomination of christians have always had this dislike of speculation; and therefore it is not at all extraordinary, that there should be so great a proportion of them, among those who think more rationally than their ancestors, and who therefore rank themselves in the class of *rational christians*. Their opinions are not

what they have investigated themselves, but what they have received from others, as much as the roman catholics have theirs. It may therefore be expected that they should be affected in the same manner towards them. Laborious inquirers after truth are but few in any community, nor is there any occasion that they should be numerous. It is only to be wished, that those who take no pains to inquire themselves would throw no obstacles in the way of him who does, and have the same indulgence for his feelings, that he has for theirs.

In another respect, also, the times in which we live are unfavourable to free inquiry in matters of religion. We are not, indeed, *persecuted* for our religious principles, and few persons have even much scruple of openly declaring what they think; but the influence of habit, of fashion, and of connexions, in these peaceable times, is such, that few persons, very few indeed, have the courage to *act* agreeably to their principles, so as to rank themselves, and to appear, in that class of men to which they really belong. They content themselves, as the heathen philosophers did, with *thinking with the wise, and acting with the vulgar*; a conduct certainly unworthy of a christian, who ought to sacrifice every thing to *truth*, and *consistency of character*. This good, however, arises from the evil, that such persons allow themselves more liberty in speculation than they probably would do,
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if they thought themselves bound in conscience to do what I should call acting agreeably to their principles; and by this means the foundation is gradually laying for a future change in the more public aspect of things.

The converts that are daily made to the unitarian doctrine, and who for the present continue members of trinitarian churches, may in time be sensible of the obligation they are under to withdraw themselves from that mode of worship; or, if not, they will always be ready to join their influence to forward any attempts that may be made towards a further reformation. And when the generality of those who really read and think shall become unitarians (and those who do not read or think for themselves are sure to follow their leaders, and of course join every majority), a small change in the political state of things in a country, such as no man can foresee before it actually takes place, and which may be at no great distance, may suffice to overturn the best-compacted establishments *at once*, before the bigotted friends of them suspect any danger. And thus the system which had stood for ages, without any visible marks of ruin or decay, may vanish, like an enchanted castle in romance. For then men, whose minds were already emancipated, will in a moment find themselves at liberty in all respects, without any motive whatever to engage them to give their support

christianity, without any alarming opposition. The conversion of Tiberius, of Vespasian, of Marcus Antoninus, or any other emperor in an earlier period, would not have done it. But when an *internal revolution* had been previously made in favour of christianity, though Constantine should not have been converted, the *external revolution* could not have been delayed much longer. It would certainly have taken place, whether any particular emperor had favoured it or not.

In like manner, when the minds of a proper number of persons were enlightened with respect to the grosser errors of popery, the boldness of Luther and a few others, roused by the impudence of the vendors of indulgences, was sufficient to produce what has been called *the reformation*. Ten Luthers, in an earlier period, would only have supplied so many victims for the inquisition; and though no Luther should have appeared at the beginning of the sixteenth century, things were then in such a state, that, by some other means, a similar revolution in favour of religious liberty would, no doubt, have taken place.

It has been well observed by philosophical historians, that if the loss of a single battle decide the fate of an empire, there must have been a previous reason, in the general state of things, why so much should depend on the event of a single battle;
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and that, in a different state of things, the loss of many battles would not have overturned the state.

It is our business, therefore, by conversation, by preaching, and by writing, to get access to the minds of those who are disposed to think; and without giving ourselves any trouble about the conduct of government, to employ ourselves simply in the propagation of truth. Here is a great and glorious field fully open to our utmost exertions, and requiring them. And while we are successful in these labours (and the success is visible every day), though we should not live to see any favourable change in the face of public affairs, we may die in as firm a faith of its taking place, as Joseph did of his countrymen inhabiting the promised land, when he ordered that he should not be buried, but that his body should only be embalmed, and put into a coffin in Egypt, ready to be carried away when they should leave that country.

The most equitable thing in the governors of any country would, no doubt, be to allow unitarians, or any other description of men, the use of a church, or any other public building in a town, in which they should be so numerous as to occupy one, and when their proportion of the tythes &c. would be sufficient for the maintenance of a minister of their persuasion; and no sort of inconvenience would arise to the state from such a measure as this. This was done in several places in Germany

many at the time of the reformation. But in the present state of things it is vain to expect any such equitable conduct. We may, however, besides *deserving* it, be doing that which shall ensure such an event at a future time; when it shall be sufficiently understood that unitarians are quite as good subjects as trinitarians, and therefore that there has been no good reason why the latter should so long have enjoyed their present exclusive advantages. How the belief of a mysterious doctrine operates to the prosperity and security of the state, is a problem not very easy to solve.

At Boston, in New-England (a country in which no man was taxed towards the support of any religion that he did not approve, and which never flourished the less on that account) there were three episcopal churches; and had the English government continued there, the English liturgy, in its present state, would, no doubt, have continued to be used in them all: but the principal of them has now adopted an unitarian form of worship, and the same will probably be done in other provinces of the United States. Was there equal liberty in this country (which may take place, by means as unforeseen by us as the revolution in America) there are few considerable towns in which the people (voting freely, and all the complex influence of the present establishment out of the question) would not have at least one unitarian church.

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And if one would be wanted now, there will, I am confident, be a demand for two twenty years hence. This may be said with tolerable certainty, from the consideration of the increase of unitarians in the last fifty years, the greater still in proportion in the last twenty, and the greatest of all in the last ten years. What then may we not reasonably expect from the train in which things now are?

The efforts of men to stop what they may call the mischief would be like the attempt to stop a rivulet supplied by a constant spring, however small. Nothing could be easier than to make a dam that would be sufficient for the purpose at first. But as the water keeps rising, the dam must be made higher and stronger, and (the effort of the water to burst its way continually increasing) the highest and strongest must necessarily fail some time or other, and the deluge, which would be the consequence, would be in proportion to the time in which it had been confined. Truth has never yet been conquered by power, numerous as have been the attempts of the latter to bear it down.

It may be said that since there has been an increase of unbelievers, as well as unitarians, in the last century, it may, on these principles, be predicted that *they* will continue to increase, to the extirpation of christians of all denominations. This reasoning, I own, would have been just, if men had become unbelievers, as well as unitarians, from

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reading and thinking. But there is in this respect a most essential difference in the two cases. Of the unbelievers of this age (I speak from the fullest persuasion) few indeed are so from that serious inquiry and real conviction, to which alone the spread of unitarianism can be ascribed. The rejection of christianity may be accounted for from many causes besides a serious conviction of its fallacy; but no other cause can reasonably be assigned why a trinitarian should become an unitarian; as the obligations of moral virtue are not relaxed by the change, and the allurements of honour and profit are on the side of the established faith.

It is evident to those who converse with unbelievers, that few of them are qualified to discuss the evidences of christianity; a proof that they have not rejected it from any deficiency that they found in its evidences; whereas there are great numbers of unitarians who can readily give the reasons of their faith, which shows that they have really considered and weighed the subject.

It is also to be observed, that a great increase of unbelievers has been owing to the corruptions of christianity; and this cause ceasing, in part by the efforts of unitarians, the effects will in due time cease of course. Christianity and its evidences are exhibited in such a light at present, that fewer philosophical persons, giving due attention to the subject (which is the great thing that is wanting, but
which

which many circumstances may excite), will be able to withhold their assent to it.

Others will object to the conclusiveness of this reasoning to prove the future universality of unitarianism, the rapid spread and long continuance of mahometanism in the world. But the grounds and principles of that religion underwent no severe discussion at the time of its promulgation. The professors of it wrote little in its defence; and there never was an age in which the mahometan and christian literati had so free and equal an intercourse, as to give room for much controversy. Whenever that shall take place, and the common people be in a capacity of reading and judging for themselves, less than a century, I am persuaded, will be sufficient fully to establish the credit of the one system, and to destroy that of the other. Which of the two must yield in the contest, I, who am a christian, cannot have a doubt.

On the contrary, christianity, from the earliest period, was eagerly attacked and defended, the common people gave great attention to the controversy, and it was the manifest superiority of the christian apologists in point of argument that decided between them.

The same observations will apply to the reformation from popery; and had not the civil powers intervened, there can be no doubt, but that an end would soon have been put to the authority of the church

church of Rome, and the chief corruptions of it. Had the reading of protestant books only been allowed in popish countries, the reformation would have kept advancing, notwithstanding all the opposition from the civil powers.

The controversy between the unitarians and trinitarians has been open many years, much has been written on both sides, the common people are become parties, and civil government does not directly interfere. In these circumstances, it is a fact which no person can deny, that a great number of the common people, with a much greater proportion of men of learning are become unitarians; and this has been the case so long, that there can be no doubt of its continuance.

The effect of free discussion is to produce a number of persons capable of writing in defence of their principles. Unbelievers really qualified to write upon the subject are very few, compared with learned christians. It is no less evident that learned unitarians increase, while learned trinitarians decrease. These facts are sufficient to enable any person, without making himself master of the respective arguments, to conclude that unitarian christians will continue to increase, to the extermination of unbelievers on the one hand, and trinitarians on the other. The interference of the civil powers, and the influence of splendid establishments, may retard this event, but will not be able to prevent it.

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Some may smile at this method of calculating and predicting events. But moral causes are as uniform and certain in their operation as natural ones, and when the *data* are equally clear, the *principles* will authorize equally sure conclusions.

If a man of common sense only, without any knowledge of philosophy, were told that the Newtonian system of the universe, after having been canvassed by philosophers of all nations, had, notwithstanding great opposition, been gradually gaining ground for the space of more than half a century, he would not doubt the universality of its reception in time. Having similar *data*, I think we may venture to predict the universal prevalence of unitarianism in a future period.

If the controversy between the arians and the socinians should be kept up ten or twenty years longer, and in all that time the socinians should continue to increase, as they have done during the last ten years, few persons will be backward to prognosticate that arianism also will finally and even soon be exterminated, especially as it has not the support of the civil powers.

The *principles* on which I argue will hardly be contested; but persons, according as they are disposed with respect to particular controversies, will see the *facts* relating to them in different lights. What I say of the uniform spread of unitarian principles may possibly be denied by some trinitarians, but it is allowed by unitarians. To them, there-

fore, it holds out a sure prospect of a final triumph over all their adversaries, and it is for their encouragement that I make these observations.

To write in this manner may be said to be imprudent, as it is giving an alarm to those who now apprehend no danger, and therefore make no efforts to prevent it. But the friends of free inquiry and truth may rest satisfied, that, as every effort which has hitherto been made to bear down the cause for which they contend, has, in reality, served to promote it, so also will every future effort that can be made for the same purpose. "The cause of truth may be compared to an engine constructed so as to be put in motion by the tide, and which is kept in its proper movement, whether the water flow in or flow out. Nothing here is wanting but *motion*, it being impossible for that motion, from whatever quarter it arise, to operate unfavourably.

The best worldly policy, in the enemies of truth, is, no doubt, that of those who endeavour to stifle all inquiry, who read nothing, and who reply to nothing. But even this will do but little, while the friends of truth are zealous and active in its interests; as by this means they have the advantage, in the eye of the world, of being known to invite and provoke discussion; being seen to walk over the field of controversy without an adversary; though it would certainly be more desirable still to have a respectable opponent.

As to this country, we may be confident that,

while error and superstition are falling every where abroad, they can never really gain ground here. We have in a great measure set the example of free inquiry, and have taken the lead in religious liberty to other nations; and though the policy of the times may be averse to any extension of this liberty, circumstances will, no doubt, arise, that will hereafter be as favourable to it in this country as they are now in others. Having hitherto been foremost in this great cause, it will not be in the power of man to keep us long behind the rest of Europe. Abroad they are *the governing powers*, that promote reformation; but with us, *the people* think and act for themselves, a circumstance infinitely more promising for an effectual and permanent reformation; there being nothing of *worldly policy* in the case, but a pure *love of truth* that is the great spring of action with us.

Notwithstanding, therefore, the indolence and indifference of friends, and the silence, or virulent opposition of enemies, let the advocates of free inquiry steadily pursue their purpose. Let us examine every thing, with the greatest freedom, without any regard to consequences, which, though we cannot distinctly see them, we may assure ourselves will be such as we shall have abundant cause to rejoice in.

Some persons dislike controversy, as leading to a *diversity of opinions*. But as this is a necessary, so it is only a temporary inconvenience. It is the only

way to arrive at a permanent and useful uniformity, which it is sure to bring about at last. Religious truth cannot be so different a thing from truth of every other kind, but that it must at length overcome all opposition; and the knowledge of its having stood the test of the severest examination, by men sufficiently able and interested to oppose it, will at last produce a firm conviction that all future opposition will be equally vain, and thus terminate in the most unwavering acquiescence.

It will be said that this process is a very slow one. But it is as sure in its operation, as it is necessary in the nature of things. Every great truth, in the firm belief of which mankind now universally acquiesce, has gone through the same process; and it has generally been longer in proportion to its importance, though somewhat shorter in proportion to the activity with which the controversies it has occasioned have been conducted. By promoting discussion, therefore, we really accelerate this progress, and are bringing forward the period of *uniformity*; while those who are the enemies of free inquiry, and who hate all controversy, are prolonging that state of suspense and diversity of opinion, which they so much dislike, and pushing back that very uniformity of opinion for which they sigh. For this *period of controversy* must have its course, and come to its proper termination, before any valuable and lasting uniformity can take place. The conduct

duct of those who wish to see an end of controversy at present may be compared to that of those who should endeavour to keep a ship steady in its place at sea; when our aim should be, by using all our sails and oars, to get into harbour, where alone it can be kept steady.

The great articles which are now in a course of discussion will not be determined in our time. But if we exert ourselves, this work may be accomplished in the time of our children, or grand-children; and surely if we have any elevation or comprehension of mind, we may look forward to, and actually enjoy, the happiness we procure for *them*. We scruple not to plant trees for the benefit of posterity. Let us likewise sow the seeds of truth for them, and anticipate the acknowledgments they will make us on that account.

I do not write this from a persuasion that every thing that I have myself contended for is indisputably true. On the contrary, I have, for the sake of discussion, hazarded many things, and shall probably hazard many more; and I have actually changed many opinions, theological as well as philosophical, which I have advanced since I was a writer. But if men make use of their faculties at all; and especially in that period which is most favourable to inquiry (which is about the middle-time of life), they may arrive at so much certainty, as will justify them in expressing a considerable degree of confidence,

dence, at least with respect to those subjects to which they have given the closest attention.

I do profess to have this confidence in my opinion concerning the doctrine of the trinity. I do not think the doctrine of transubstantiation more manifestly absurd, and this is by much the less mischievous of the two. Not that I think there are no wise and good men who are advocates for the doctrine of the trinity. I acknowledge there are. But there are likewise many persons, of whose ability and integrity also I think very highly, who are advocates for the doctrine of transubstantiation; and as there were learned pagans five centuries after the promulgation of christianity, there may be some respectable believers in the doctrines of the trinity and of transubstantiation, some ages hence.

The minds of a few *individuals* may be so locked up as that no keys we can apply will be able to open them. But it is with *the bulk of mankind* that we have to do, because they will always be within the reach of reason: and solitary unbelievers, or solitary bigots, may have their use in the general system; an use similar to that of the few idolatrous inhabitants of the land of Canaan, who were not extirpated; which was that of trying and exercising the Israelites, without having it in their power to drive them out again.

TWO DISCOURSES;

I. ON HABITUAL DEVOTION.

II. ON THE DUTY OF NOT LIVING TO OURSELVES.

[Published in the Year 1782.]

THE PREFACE.

THE former of these discourses I have been induced to publish by the request of the body of dissenting ministers who assemble annually at Dudley, in Staffordshire, before whom the greater part of it was delivered on Tuesday the 21st of May last. The latter was preached before the assembly of ministers of the counties of Lancaster and Chester, met at Manchester, May 16th, 1764, to carry into execution a scheme for the relief of their widows and children. But though it was printed at their request, it was not generally published; as only a small edition was printed, and sold in that neighbourhood. Several of my friends having expressed their wishes to see it made more public, I have thought proper to print them together, especially as the subjects of them have a considerable relation to each other; the one recommending a proper disposition of mind with respect to God, and the other that which respects men. In both of them, also, I have availed myself of Dr. Hartley's theory of the human affections, the excellence of which is, that it not only explains, with wonderful simplicity, many phenomena of the mind, which are altogether inexplicable on other principles, but also leads to a variety of practical applications, and those of the
most

most valuable kind. Of this I have given several specimens in my *Observations on Education*, and others of my publications.

My apology for introducing any thing of this nature into these discourses is, that neither of them was composed for a common audience. Besides, the most abstruse parts of them are of such a nature, as to be pretty easily intelligible to persons of reflection, though they should have no knowledge of that particular theory. For the general doctrine of the *association of ideas* is known to all persons of a liberal education. Whenever I have delivered these discourses before a common audience, I have omitted whatever I thought would not be readily understood by them, and such passages (which however are not very many) may now be passed over, without much difficulty or inconvenience, by those persons for whose use they are not calculated.

To the former of these discourses the public are already under considerable obligations, though they have been ignorant of it; as it was the occasion of that excellent poem of Mrs. Barbauld, intitled *An Address to the Deity*, which was composed immediately after the first delivery of it, before an assembly of ministers at Wakefield, in Yorkshire, in the year 1767. Were I to inform my readers how soon that poem appeared after the delivery of the discourse, it would add much to their idea of the powers of the writer. I could also make the same observation

observation with respect to several other pieces, and some of them the most admired in that collection.

If my theological publications have been more of a *speculative* than of a *practical* nature, it is merely because circumstances have led me to it, and by no means because the former are more pleasing to me. I hope I shall always consider speculation as subservient to practice. The most exact knowledge of truth, and the greatest zeal for it, will avail nothing without the practice of those virtues which the most uninstructed of mankind perfectly understand. Nay, the more knowledge we have of the christian religion, of the general plan and object of it, the more inexcusable shall we be, if we do not, in the first place, take care to impress our hearts with that *love of God*, and that unreserved devotedness to his will, which our Saviour calls *the first and greatest of all the commandments*, and also with that disinterested good-will to our fellow creatures, which he calls *the second great commandment, and like unto it*.

He was himself equally exemplary with respect to them both: and it is vain for us to pretend to be *christians*, if we do not study to resemble him (whom alone we are to acknowledge in the character of Lord and master) in the disposition of our minds, and in the conduct of our lives. May we all be so attentive to discharge our proper duty, and to improve the talents with which we are severally intrusted, that
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when, according to his promise, *he shall return, and take an account of his servants, we may be found without spot and blameless.*

The world in which we live, with all the influences to which we are subject, may be equally our friend or our enemy, according to the use we make of it. It is wonderfully adapted, by the exercise it gives to our faculties, and to our passions and affections, to *establish, strengthen, and settle us* in the habit and practice of all virtue, and to raise us to a pitch of excellence to which Adam in paradise could never have attained. But then it is equally possible that, by sloth and indulgence, we may debase our natures to a degree equally wonderful. The knowledge and belief of christianity itself, as well as every other advantage of which we are possessed, is also capable either of promoting the moral perfection of our natures, and our fitness for immortal happiness, or of making us the proper objects of a greater condemnation than that of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment.

It behoves us then to consider our situation and all our privileges very attentively, that we may make the best use of them. It is not in our option to be in any other circumstances than those in which our Maker has placed us. It will also avail us nothing to *hide any talent in a napkin.* As we have received it, we must give an account of the use we make of it.

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We are likewise ignorant of the time when this account will be called for; and, great and serious as the business of life is, the time allowed for the dispatch of it is both short, and uncertain. But, though short, it is sufficient for the purpose of it, if it be rightly improved; and then the uncertainty of its duration is a circumstance that does not need to give us any concern. *At such an hour as we think not the judge may come, but then, happy is that servant whom his Lord, when he cometh, shall find watching.*

I shall take the liberty to close this preface with an extract of what is more peculiarly practical, and therefore more immediately suiting my present purpose, from Mrs. Barbauld's poem above mentioned.

If the soft hand of winning pleasure leads
By living waters, and through flowery meads,
When all is smiling, tranquil, and serene,
And vernal beauty paints the flatt'ring scene;
Oh teach me to elude each latent snare,
And whisper to my sliding heart, **BEWARE :**
With caution let me hear the syren's voice,
And, doubtful, with a trembling heart rejoice.

If, friendless, in a vale of tears I stray,
Where briers wound, and thorns perplex my way,
Still let my steady soul thy goodness see,
And with strong confidence lay hold on thee;

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With equal joy my various lot receive,
 Resign'd to die, or resolute to live;
 Prepar'd to kiss the sceptre, or the rod,
 While God is seen in all, and all in God.

With thee in shady solitudes I walk,
 With thee in busy crowded cities talk;
 In every creature own thy forming pow'r,
 In each event thy providence adore.
 Thy hopes shall animate my drooping soul,
 Thy precepts guide me, and thy fear controul.
 Thus shall I rest, unmov'd by all alarms,
 Secure within the temple of thy arms;
 From anxious cares, from gloomy terrors free,
 And feel myself omnipotent in thee.

Then, when the last, the closing hour draws nigh
 And earth recedes before my swimming eye,
 Teach me to quit this transitory scene
 With decent triumph and a look serene;
 Teach me to fix my ardent hopes on high,
 And, having liv'd to thee, in thee to die.

SERMON V.

ON HABITUAL DEVOTION.

PSALM x. 4.

THE WICKED, THROUGH THE PRIDE OF HIS
COUNTEenance, WILL NOT SEEK AFTER
GOD. GOD IS NOT IN ALL HIS THOUGHTS.

GOD, my christian brethren, is a being with whom we all of us have to do, and the relation we stand in to him is the most important of all our relations. Our connexions with other beings, and other things, are slight, and transient, in comparison with this. God is our *maker*, our constant *preserver* and *benefactor*, our moral *governor*, and our final *judge*. He is present with us wherever we are; the secrets of all hearts are constantly known to him, and *he is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity*. Here, then, is a situation in which we find ourselves, that demands our closest attention. The consideration is, in the highest degree, interesting and alarming: knowing how absolutely dependent we are upon God, that *in him we live and move and have our being*; and knowing also, that by vice and folly we have rendered ourselves justly obnoxious to his displeasure.

Now, to think, and to act, in a manner corresponding to this our necessary intercourse with God, certainly requires that we keep up an habitual regard to it: and a total, or very great degree of inattention to it, must be highly criminal and dangerous. Accordingly, we find in the scriptures, that it is characteristic of a good man, that *he sets the Lord always before him*, and that *he acknowledges God in all his ways*. Whereas it is said of the wicked, in my text, that *God is not in all their thoughts*; and elsewhere, that *the fear of God is not before their eyes*; that *they put the thoughts of God far from them, and will not the knowledge of the Most High*.

This circumstance seems to furnish a pretty good test of the state of a man's mind with respect to virtue and vice. The most abandoned and profligate of mankind are those who live *without God in the world*, entirely thoughtless of his being, perfections, and providence; having their hearts wholly engrossed with this world and the things of it: by which means those passions, which terminate in the enjoyment of them, are inflamed to such a degree, that no other principle can restrain their indulgence. These persons may be called *practical atheists*; and the temper of mind they have acquired often leads them to deny both natural and revealed religion. They secretly wish, indeed they cannot but wish, there may be no truth in those principles,

ciples, the apprehension of which is apt to give them disturbance ; and hence they give little attention to the evidence that is produced for them, and magnify all the objections they hear made to them. And it is well known, that, in a mind so strongly biassed, the most cogent reasons often amount to nothing, while the most trifling cavils pass for demonstration. It is the same with respect to any other speculation, when the mind has got a *bias* in favour of any particular conclusion.

On the other hand, a truly and perfectly good man loves, and therefore cherishes, the thought of God, his father and his friend ; till every production of divine power and skill, every instance of divine bounty, and every event of divine providence, never fails to suggest to his mind the idea of the great author of all things, *the giver of every good and every perfect gift*, and the sovereign disposer of all affairs and of all events. Thus he lives, as it were, constantly *seeing him, who is invisible*. He sees God in every thing, and he sees every thing in God. He *dwells in love*, and thereby *dwells in God, and God in him*. And so long as he considers himself as living in the world which God has made, and partaking of the bounty with which his providence supplies him ; so long as he is intent upon discharging his duty, in the situation in which he believes the Divine Being has placed him, and meets with no greater trials and difficul-

ties than he is persuaded his God and father has appointed for his good, it is almost impossible that the thought of God should ever be long absent from his mind. Every thing he sees or feels will make it recur again and again perpetually. His whole life will be, as it were, one act of devotion; and this state of mind, being highly pleasurable, and his satisfaction having infinite sources, will be daily increasing, so as to grow more equable, and more intense, to all eternity; when it will be *joy unspeakable, and full of glory.*

These are the two extremes of the sentiments and conduct of men with respect to God, and all the varieties of the human characters will be found somewhere between them; so that we may be deemed virtuous or vicious, in proportion as we approach to the one or the other.

The more imperfect of the middle classes of mankind will have their minds too much engrossed by this world and the things of it, so as to exclude, in a very great degree, the apprehension of God, and of their relation to him. Provided, however, that they have had a religious education, these thoughts cannot be prevented from recurring from time to time, and producing stronger or weaker resolutions of repentance and amendment; but not having their full influence, and therefore serving rather to disquiet the mind conscious of a want of perfect integrity, they will be apt to be overborne by the superior

superior power of things seen and temporal; and the minds of such persons being in this fluctuating condition, whatever success they may have in the world, their lives will contain a great mixture of anxiety and remorse.

But those whom we may style the more perfect of the middle classes of men, though, like the former, their minds may be now and then carried away by the magic influences of this world; and though they may give too far, and too eagerly, into the pursuit of its pleasures, riches, and honours, they will never wholly, or for a long time, lose sight of God, and of their duty; and pious sentiments, recurring with superior force at intervals, will produce a kind of *religious fervour*, which, rousing the mind to a greater exertion of its powers, will produce good resolutions with considerable strength and vigour, and thereby break their growing attachment to the world. These fervours, however, will of course remit, and other objects will necessarily resume some part, at least, of their influence: but if a sense of God and of religion have once taken firm hold of the mind, in the early part of life, there will be reason to hope that an express regard to them will return with greater force, and after shorter intervals, perpetually. By these means such strength will be given to the principle of conscience, that in the furthest excursions they make from the strict path of religion, even while they maintain no
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express regard to God in their actions, the bare apprehension of a thing being *right*, and their *duty*, will, in all considerable instances, immediately and mechanically determine their minds; so that they will never deliberately do any thing which they are convinced is unlawful, and offensive to God. At most, if ever a stronger temptation than usual should induce them to transgress their known duty, in any of the greater instances of it, the state of their minds will be such, as that these transgressions will be followed by the keenest compunction and contrition, which will make them less liable to commit the same offence a second time.

Thus we see that those persons, in whose minds there is this prevailing disposition to virtue, will be improved both by the uniform practice of their duty, which necessarily strengthens the *habit* of it, and even by occasional transgressions, which gives a stronger *stimulus* to the power of conscience. But there is great danger, lest these violations of known duty be either so great as to produce despair, which naturally hardens the mind, or so frequent as to beget a habit. Both these weaken the power of conscience. The man then goes backward in religion, and may at last, even from this more advanced state of virtue, be brought to *commit all iniquity with greediness*. Let him, then, *who thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall*; and let all of us, conscious of the frailty of our natures, be in-
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tent upon *working out our salvation with fear and trembling.*

An *habitual regard to God* being the most effectual means of advancing us from the more imperfect to the more perfect state I have been describing, I shall endeavour to recommend this leading duty to you, by a fuller and more distinct enumeration of its happy effects; and I shall then show what I apprehend to be the most effectual methods of promoting it, and of removing the various obstructions to it.

1. An habitual regard to God in our actions tends greatly to keep us firm in our adherence to our duty. It has pleased divine providence to place man in a state of trial and probation. This world is strictly such. We are surrounded with a great variety of objects, adapted to gratify a variety of senses with which we are furnished. The pleasures they give us are all innocent in moderation, and they engage us in a variety of agreeable and proper pursuits. But our natures are such, as that the frequent indulgence of any of our appetites tends to make its demands inordinate, and to beget an habitual propensity to indulge it; and this proneness to the excessive indulgence of any of our passions enslaves our minds, and is highly dangerous, and criminal. By this means we too often come to forget God our maker, to injure our fellow-creatures of mankind, and to do a still greater, and

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more irreparable injury to ourselves, both in mind and body.

It has pleased almighty God, therefore, from the concern he had for our good, to forbid these immoderate indulgences of the love of pleasure, riches and honour, by express *laws*, guarded with the most awful sanctions. Now we are certainly less liable to forget these laws, and our obligation to observe them, when we keep up an habitual regard to our great lawgiver and judge; when we consider him a always *present with us*; when we consider that *his eyes are in every place, beholding both the evil and the good*; that he *sees in secret*, and will one day *reward openly*. In this manner we shall acquire an habitual reverence for God and his laws, which will end in an habitual obedience to them, even without an express regard to their authority. Thus we should certainly be less likely to neglect the request of a friend, or the injunction of a master, if we could always keep in mind the remembrance of our friend or master; and a constant attention to them would certainly give us a habit of pleasing them in all things.

2. An habitual regard to God promotes an uniform cheerfulness of mind; it tends to dissipate anxiety, or melancholy, and may even, in some cases, prevent madness. Without a regard to God as the maker and governor of all things, the world affords but a gloomy and uncomfortable prospect

spect. Without this, we see no great *end* for which we have to live, we have no great or animating *object* to pursue; and whatever schemes we may be carrying on, our views are bounded by a very short and narrow space. To an atheist, therefore, every thing must appear little, dark, and confused. And let it be considered, that, in proportion as we forget God, and lose our regard to him, we adopt the sentiments and views of atheists, and shut our eyes to the bright and glorious prospects which religion exhibits to us.

Religion, my brethren, the doctrine of a God, of a providence, and of a future state, opens an immense, a glorious, and most transporting prospect; and every man, who is humbly conscious that he conforms to the will of his maker, may enjoy, and rejoice in, this prospect. Considering ourselves as the subjects of the moral government of God, we see a most important sphere of action in which we have to exert ourselves, we have the greatest of all objects set before us, *glory, honour, and immortality; an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away*, as the reward of our faithful *perseverance in well-doing*; and we have a boundless existence, an eternity, in which to pursue and enjoy this reward.

These great views and objects, the contemplation of which must be habitual to the mind which keeps up an habitual regard to God, cannot fail to diminish

minish the lustre of *the things of time and sense*, which engage our attention here below ; and while they lessen our solicitude and anxiety about them, they must cure that fretfulness, and distress of mind, which is occasioned by the disappointments we meet with in them.

For the same reason, this habitual regard to God, this life of devotion, which I would recommend, must tend in some measure to prevent that most deplorable of all the calamities mankind are subject to, I mean *madness*. It is well known, that the circumstance which generally first occasions, or at least greatly contributes to, this disorder, is too close and too anxious an attention to some *single thing* in which a person is greatly interested ; so that, for a long time, he can hardly think of any thing else, and particularly is often prevented from *sleeping*, by means of it. Thus we frequently see, that when persons are of a sanguine temper of mind, a severe disappointment of any kind will end in madness. Also a sudden transport of *joy*, from unexpected success, will sometimes have the same effect. But, from the nature of the thing, this violence of either kind could hardly take place in a truly devout and pious mind, in the mind of a man who considers all the events, in which he can be concerned, as appointed by a God infinitely wise and good ; who, he is persuaded, hath, in the most afflictive providences, the most gracious intention
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to him, and to all mankind; and who, by the most prosperous events, means to try his virtue, and to put him upon the most difficult of all exercises, that of behaving properly in such circumstances. To a mind rightly disposed, and duly seasoned with a sense of religion, nothing here below will appear to be of sufficient moment to produce these dreadful effects. *We shall rejoice, as though we rejoiced not; and weep, as though we wept not; knowing that the fashion of this world passeth away.*

Deep melancholy is often occasioned, in persons of a lower tone of spirits, by the same kind of disappointments which produce raging madness in others. It is the effect of *despair*, and could never take place, but when a person apprehended that that which we may call his *all*, that in which he put his chief trust and confidence, had failed him, and he had no other resource to fly to. But a truly religious man can never despair; because, let what will befall him here below, he knows his chief happiness is safe, being lodged where *neither moth nor rust can corrupt, and where thieves cannot break through nor steal. In patience, therefore, he will be able at all times to possess his own soul, exercising a steady trust and confidence in God, the rock of ages, the sure resting-place of all generations.*

Melancholy, or despondence in a lower degree, what we commonly call *lowness of spirits*, generally arises from a want of some object of pursuit sufficient to engage the attention, and rouse a man to

he will be more master of himself, have greater presence of mind, and act with greater prudence in time of danger. If he die in the glorious struggle, he dies, not with the gloomy ferocity of the mere man of this world, but with the triumph of a christian, in a consciousness of having finished his career of virtue in the most glorious manner in which he could possibly finish it, in the service of his country, and of mankind.

Having thus considered the important *effects* of an habitual regard to God in all our ways, I come to treat of the most proper and effectual methods of promoting this temper of mind.

1. If you be really desirous to cultivate this habitual devotion, endeavour, in the first place, to divest your minds of too great a multiplicity of the cares of this world. The man who lives to God, in the manner in which I have been endeavouring to describe, lives to him principally, and loves and confides in him above all. To be solicitous about this world, therefore, as if our chief happiness consisted in it, must be incompatible with this devotion. *We cannot serve God and Mammon.* If we be *christians*, we should consider that the great and professed object of our religion is the revelation of a future life, of unspeakably more importance to us than this transitory world, and the perishable things of it. As christians, we should consider ourselves as *citizens of heaven*, and only
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strangers and pilgrims here below. We must therefore see, that, as christians, there is certainly required of us a considerable degree of indifference about this world, which was only intended to serve us as a passage to a better.

The Divine Being himself has made wise provision for lessening the cares of this world, by the appointment of one day in seven, for the purpose of rest and avocation from labour. Let us then, at least, take the advantage which this day gives us, of *calling off our eyes from beholding vanity*, and of *quickenings ourselves in the ways of God*.

This advice I would particularly recommend to those persons who are engaged in *arts, manufactures and commerce*. For, highly beneficial as these things are in a political view, and subservient to the elegant enjoyment of life, they seem not to be so favourable to religion and devotion, as the business of *agriculture*; and for this reason, therefore, probably, among others, the Divine Being forbade commerce to the people of the Jews, and gave them such laws as are chiefly adapted to a life of husbandry. The husbandman is in a situation particularly favourable to the contemplation of the works of God, and to a sense of his dependence upon him. The rain from heaven, and various circumstances relating to the weather, &c. on which the goodness of his crops depends, he receives as from the hand of God, and is hardly sensible of any secondary,

dary, or more immediate cause. If he understand any thing of the principles of vegetation, and can account for a few obvious appearances upon what we call *the laws of nature*; these laws he knows to be the express appointment of God, and he cannot help perceiving the wisdom and goodness of God in the appointment; so that the objects about which he is daily conversant are, in their nature, a lesson of gratitude and praise.

Besides, the employment of the husbandman being, chiefly, to *bring food out of the earth*, his attention is more confined to the real wants, or at most the principal conveniences, of life; and his mind is not, like that of the curious artist and manufacturer, so liable to be fascinated by a taste for superfluities, and the fictitious wants of men.

Nor, lastly, does the business of husbandry so wholly engross a man's thoughts and attention, while he is employed about it, as many of the arts and manufactures, and as commerce necessarily does. And it should be a general rule with us, that the more *attention of mind* our employment in life requires, the more careful should we be to draw our thoughts from it, on the *day of rest*, and at other intervals of time set apart for devotional purposes. Otherwise, a worldly-minded temper, not being checked or controuled by any thing of a contrary tendency, will necessarily get possession of our hearts.

2. This brings me to the second advice, which is, by no means to omit stated times of worshipping God by prayer, public and private. Every passion and affection in our frame is strengthened by the proper and natural expression of it. Thus frequent intercourse and conversation with those we love promotes friendship; and so also the intercourse we keep up with God by prayer, in which we express our reverence and love of him, and our confidence in him, promotes a spirit of devotion, and makes it easier for the ideas of the Divine Being and his providence to occur to the mind on other occasions, when we are not formally praying to him. Besides, if persons whose thoughts are much employed in the business of this life had no time set apart for the exercises of devotion, they would be in danger of neglecting it entirely; at least, to a degree that would be attended with a great diminution of their virtue and happiness.

But, in order that the exercises of devotion may be the most efficacious to promote the true spirit and general habit of it, it is advisable that *prayers* properly so called, that is, direct addresses to the Divine Being, be short. The strong feeling of reverence, love, and confidence, which ought to animate our devotions, cannot be kept up in such minds as ours through a prayer of considerable length; and a tedious languor in prayer is of great disservice to the life of religion, as it accustoms the

lar notice, if not the ridicule, of the generality of those who may be present; whereas, could we decently and seriously express our gratitude to God upon every agreeable occurrence, and our resignation and submission to his will upon every calamitous event of life, it would tend greatly to strengthen the habit of *acknowledging God in all our ways*, and promote the spirit of devotion.

In no other country, I believe, whatever, neither among the roman catholics, nor mahometans, have people, even the most fashionable and polite, any idea of being ashamed of their religion. On the contrary, they are rather ostentatious of it, and therefore they seem to have more than they are really possessed of: and this is the case with some, both of the established church, and among the dissenters in England. But, unfortunately, this outward show of religion was carried to such a length, about a century ago, in this country, and was sometimes made to subserve such infamous purposes, that, I believe, the greater part of the most sincerely pious and humble christians now make a point of exposing to the world as little of the religion they have as possible; so that they are really possessed of much more than they seem to have. This I trust is the case with great numbers, who are little suspected of being particularly religious, because they are seldom or never heard to talk about it. And, upon the whole, while things are so unfortunately

unately circumstanced, I think this extreme preferable to the other ; as, of all things, the reproach of hypocrisy ought to be avoided with the utmost care.

4. In a more especial manner, never fail to have recourse to God upon every occasion of strong emotion of mind, whether it be of a pleasurable, or of a painful nature. When your mind is labouring under distressing doubts, and great anxiety, or when you are any way embarrassed in the conduct of your affairs, fly to God, as your friend and father, your counsellor and your guide. In a sincere and earnest endeavour to discharge your duty, and to act the upright and honourable part, *commit your way unto him*, repose yourselves upon his providence, confiding in his care to over-rule every thing for the best, and you will find a great, and almost instantaneous relief. Your perturbation of mind will subside, as by a charm, and the storm will become a settled calm. Tumultuous and excessive joy will also be moderated by this means ; and thus all your emotions will be rendered more equable, more pleasurable, and more lasting. And this is produced not by any supernatural agency of God on the mind, but is the natural effect of placing entire confidence in a being of perfect wisdom and goodness.

But the capital advantage you will derive from this practice will be, that the idea of God being,
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by this means, associated with all the strongest emotions of your mind, your whole stock of devotional sentiments and feelings will be increased. All those strong emotions, now separately indistinguishable, will coalesce with the idea of God, and make part of the complex train of images suggested by the term, so that you will afterwards think of God oftener, and with more fervour than before; and the thought of him will have greater influence with you than ever.

5. In order to cultivate the spirit of habitual devotion, labour to free your minds from all consciousness of guilt, and self-reproach, by means of a constant attention to the upright and steady discharge of the whole of your duty. In consequence of neglecting our duty, we become backward, as we may say, to make our appearance before God. We cannot look up to him with full confidence of his favour and blessing; and are, therefore, too apt to omit devotion entirely. Besides, we always feel an aversion to the exercise of *self-abasement* and *contrition*, which are all the sentiments that we can with propriety indulge in those circumstances; especially as we have a secret suspicion, that we shall, for some time at least, go on to live as we have done; so that rather than confess our sins, and continue to live in them, we choose not to make confession at all.

But this, my brethren, is egregious trifling; and highly dangerous. Thus, at best, all improvement

is at a stand with us, if we be not going fatally backwards in our moral state. If this be our character, (as I believe it is, more or less, that of a very great number even of those I have called the better sort of the middle classes of men), let us in time, and in good earnest, cast off all our sins, negligences, and follies, by true repentance. Let us draw near, and *acquaint ourselves with God*, that we may be at peace. You can have no true peace, assurance, or satisfaction of mind in this life without it; for, if you be of the class I am now referring to, it is too late for you to have a perfect enjoyment of a life of sin and dissipation. And between that kind of peace, or rather *stupor*, which those who are abandoned to wickedness, those who are wholly addicted to this world and make it their sole end, or those who are grossly ignorant of religion, enjoy, and that *inward peace and satisfaction* which accompanies the faithful and earnest discharge of every known duty, there is no sufficient medium. You may go about seeking rest in this wide space, while your hearts are divided between God and the world, but you will find none; whereas the *fruit of righteousness*, of a sincere and impartial, though imperfect obedience to the law of God, is *peace and assurance for ever*.

Sixthly, and lastly. To facilitate the exercise of devotion, cultivate in your minds just ideas of God, with whom you have to do upon those occasions,

sions, and divest your minds, as far as possible, of all superstitious and dishonourable notions of him. Consider him as the good father of the prodigal son, in that excellent parable of our Saviour. Let it sink deep into your minds, as one of the most important of all principles, that the God with whom we have to do is essentially, of himself, and without regard to any foreign consideration whatever, *abundant in mercy, not willing that any should perish, but that he had rather that all should come to repentance*; and then, notwithstanding you consider yourselves as frail, imperfect, and sinful creatures; and though you cannot help accusing yourselves of much negligence, folly, and vice; you may still approach him with perfect confidence in his readiness to receive, love, and cherish you, upon your sincere return to him.

In this light our Lord Jesus Christ always represented *his father and our father, his God and our God*. This is the most solid ground of consolation to minds burdened with a sense of guilt; and, what is of great advantage, it is the most natural, the most easy and intelligible of all others. If once you quit this firm hold, you involve yourselves in a system, and a labyrinth, in which you either absolutely find no rest, and wander in uncertainty and horror; or, if you do attain to any thing of assurance, it is of such a kind, and in such a manner, as can hardly fail to feed that *spiritual pride*

pride which will lead you to despise others; nay, unless counteracted by other causes, too often ends in a spirit of censoriousness, hatred, and persecution.

Religious melancholy, the most deplorable of all the cases of melancholy, will never be effectually relieved by any consideration but that of the mercy and clemency of the Divine Being. This unhappy state of mind arises from superstition. It consists in an excessive and unreasonable fear of God; and is peculiarly incident to persons of the greatest tenderness of conscience. And if we consider nothing but the holiness of the divine nature, and our proneness to vice and folly, there will be no end of this distressing scrupulosity in the best-disposed minds. But, in our situation, we must learn to acquiesce in the sense of our manifold imperfections, and the unavoidable consequences of them; and to take refuge in the goodness and compassion of God, who *considers our frame, and remembers that we are but dust.* This is the part of humility.

So long as we are seeking to justify ourselves in the sight of God (unless our minds be absolutely blinded) we shall not fail to condemn ourselves; for *there is not a man upon earth, not even the most just and righteous man, who doeth good and sinneth not.* Yea, in many things we offend all: so that, if we should say we have no sin, we should deceive our-

selves, and the truth would not be in us: but it is a never-failing source of consolation, that, if we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Moreover, let it be considered, by persons labouring under this deplorable calamity, that this fear of displeasing God, and anxiety about our future state, is one of the best evidences we can have that *our hearts are, upon the whole, right towards God*; that we are seeking first, and before all things else, *the kingdom of God and his righteousness*, and that we are not so much concerned about *the bread that perishes*, as about *that which endures to everlasting life*. Our Saviour said, *Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted; blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled*; so that this excess of religious fear, producing despondence and melancholy, is a state of greater safety, though it be less pleasing, than that of religious joy.

This fear of God, when it has once exceeded its due bounds, and degenerated into superstition, and when it is not cured by a confidence in the divine mercy and clemency, by that *love which casteth out fear*, is of a most alarming nature, and has often been productive of the most fatal effects. What is it that superstitious mortals have scrupled either to do, or suffer, in order to recommend themselves to God? Voluntary pains, and penalties,
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of the most frightful kinds, have not been spared for this purpose; and men like ourselves, yea, *the excellent of the earth*, men of whom the world was not worthy, have been persecuted, and massacred, under the idea of *doing God service*.

I shall, also, here give an admonition concerning another inconvenience which we are apt to be betrayed into, by imperfect and unworthy conceptions of God. It is that kind of enthusiasm which arises from an excess of religious joy, as the superstition I have just described arises from an excess of religious fear. It is well known, that, in the beginning of a religious life, persons of a warm temper of mind are apt to be carried away with extreme fervour. They are swelled with a tumultuous and rapturous joy, attended with great zeal in the discharge of their duty. But all this is of short continuance, and generally ends in a most unaccountable *languor*, and even a total indifference about religion, which astonishes them, and which they are apt to consider as the consequence of the presence of God deserting them; that peculiar presence which they supposed to be the cause of the preceding fervour. Also, in this deadness to devotional fervour, and indifference about religion, they are apt to imagine their former experience to have been an illusion. All religion, in that state of their minds, appears like a dream; and they afterwards often fancy themselves to have been

tempted by the devil, to disbelieve and renounce it all, natural and revealed.

But the peculiar warmth of those emotions is owing to the novelty of them, together with a kind of *familiarity* in our conceptions of God, which leads to such a passionate joy as we naturally indulge with respect to beings like ourselves. But more awful, and, on account of the preceding excessive familiarity, too awful ideas of God will follow and check that fond transport. The emotion itself, having been above the usual tenor of the sensations, will of course subside; and the idea of God, being as yet single, as we may say, and not associated with a sufficient variety of other objects, cannot long be retained in the mind, any more than any other single idea unconnected with others. Consequently, other objects, and trains of thought, which we have been before accustomed to, will force themselves upon the mind; and these, not having had any previous connexions with the ideas of God and religion, will exclude them, so that the former religious state of mind will as absolutely disappear for a time, as if it had never existed.

All this, however, is perfectly natural, and will give no alarm to those who have a sufficient knowledge of human nature. In this case, a person who would favour his progress in religion should calmly acquiesce in the imperfection of his devotion. He should give himself, in the intervals of
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it, to the steady prosecution of his lawful business, considering *that* as his proper *duty*, as *serving mankind* and *serving God*, and therefore by no means foreign to religion; depending upon it, that, if he only be careful to *keep his conscience void of offence*, his devotional feelings will return in due time. Let him then endeavour to purify and exalt his conceptions of God as much as possible; for this will tend both to give him humiliating views of himself, and to make his pious emotions more composed, and more permanent. And, by degrees, by frequently endeavouring to raise his views above the world, while he is employed in it, religion will come to be no longer the business of an hour, or of a limited time, with him, but he will *walk with God all the day long*, and proceed in the path of his duty with a calm and equal, a steady and a persevering progress.

I shall conclude this discourse with observing, that if a person should never experience any thing of this fervour of devotion, which I have been endeavouring to describe and explain, I should by no means pronounce him the less safe on that account. This fervour of devotion is in a manner incompatible with the constitution of some persons' minds; and an uniform care *to glorify God in all our actions*, and to *preserve a conscience void of offence towards God and towards all men*, without any thing of that warmth of zeal and devotion, which often delights, but also often misleads others; this, I say, will certainly

tainly be sufficient, according to the gracious constitution of the gospel, to entitle a person to that *glorious recompense of reward*, to that *eternal life*, which awaits all those who, by nothing but *patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, honour, and immortality*. Our Saviour himself has assured us, that if a man *do the will of God* (he makes no other condition, he describes no particular *feeling*) he shall be to him as *a brother, a sister, or a mother*.

We well know, my christian brethren, *what it is that the Lord our God requires of us*, in order to live and to die in his favour, namely, *to do justice, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with our God*. To this plain path of duty, then, let us adhere, without being anxious about any thing further. Whether we have those fervours of devotion, which some feel, and are apt to be proud of, or not, we shall experience that *great peace of mind*, which *all those have who keep God's law*; and having lived the life of the righteous, our *latter end will also be like his*; the foundation of our joy being *the testimony of our consciences, that in simplicity and godly sincerity we have had our conversation in the world*.

It is true, we are imperfect, sinful creatures: But, notwithstanding this, we have all possible encouragement given us to trust in the abundant mercy of our gracious God and father, in that mercy which is essential to his nature, as a Being *who is infinitely good, and who is love itself*; and which,

ich, if we could entertain the least doubt concerning it, he fully declared to all the world, by Moses and the prophets, by Jesus Christ and his apostles ; whom he sent into the world to preach the precious doctrine of repentance and remission of sins, whereby to redeem (i. e. to deliver) us from all iniquity, and to reconcile us to God. Animated, therefore, by the glorious promises of the gospel, let us, my christian brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abiding in the work of the Lord, knowing that our labour shall not finally be in vain in the Lord.

maxim, and deciding, with respect to this particular case, that all christians ought to act according to the will of Christ, and consult the good and the peace of their fellow-christians, he declares in general, that *no man liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself; but whether we live, we live unto the Lord, or whether we die, we die unto the Lord*; that is, in all our actions our views should not be directed to ourselves, but to the interest of our holy religion. And as the christian religion has for its object the happiness of mankind (since *Christ came to bless us in turning us away from our iniquities*), it is the same thing as if he had said, the great scope of all our conduct should be the real welfare of all to whom our influence can extend.

We should therefore, my brethren, according to this apostolical maxim, by no means confine our regards to ourselves, and have our own pleasure, profit, or advantage in view in every thing we undertake; but look out of, and beyond ourselves, and take a generous concern in the happiness of all our brethren of mankind, making their sorrows our sorrows, their joys our joys, and their happiness our pursuit: and it is in this disinterested conduct, and in this only, that we shall find our own true happiness.

That this is the true rule of human life, will appear, whether we consider the course of nature without us, the situation of mankind in this world,

or take a nearer view of the principles of human nature. And we shall likewise find that several considerations drawn from the holy scriptures will further confirm and illustrate this maxim of human conduct which was first suggested by them.

1. This disinterested conduct of man is most agreeable to the course of nature without us. There is no part of the creation, which will not, if it be viewed attentively, expose the selfishness and narrow-mindedness of men. For, among all that infinite variety of things and creatures which present themselves to our view, not one of them appears to have been made merely for itself, but every thing bears a relation to something else. They can hardly be said to afford any matter for contemplation singly, and are most of all the objects of our admiration when considered as connected with other things. The primary uses of things are few, but the secondary uses of every thing are almost infinite. Indeed, the secondary uses of things are so many, that we are lost in the multiplicity of them; whereas we can give no answer, if we be asked what is the primary use of any thing, but this general one, which will equally suit every thing, that every creature which is capable of happiness was made to enjoy that share of it which is suited to its nature.

Now, what do we mean, when we say that the several parts of nature are *adapted* to one another, but that they are *made for the use* of one another? I shall mention only a few of these mutual relations

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and uses, beginning with those parts of nature which are the most remote from one another, and whose mutual relations and uses are the least obvious, and proceeding to those in which they are more obvious. The sun, the moon, the planets, and comets, are strictly connected, and combined into one system. Each body, though so exceedingly remote from the rest, is admirably adapted, by its situation, magnitude, and velocity in its orbit, to the state of the whole, in those respects and many others. This connexion, probably, also extends to the remotest bodies in the universe: so that it is impossible to say, that the withdrawing of any one would not, in some respect or other, affect all the rest.

The clouds and the rain are designed to moisten the earth, and the sun to warm it; and the texture and juices of the earth are formed so as to receive the genial influences of both, in order to ripen and bring to perfection that infinite variety of plants and fruits, the seeds of which are deposited in it. Again, is not each plant peculiarly adapted to its proper soil and climate, so that every country is furnished with those productions which are peculiarly suited to it? Are not all plants likewise suited to the various kinds of animals which feed upon them; so that, though they enjoy a kind of life peculiar to themselves, and all the influences they are exposed to be adapted to promote that life, they themselves
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are as much adapted to maintain that higher kind of life which is enjoyed by creatures of the animal nature?

The various kinds of animals are again, in a thousand ways, adapted to, and formed for, the use of one another. Beasts of a fiercer nature prey upon the tamer cattle: fishes of a larger size live almost wholly upon those of a less: and there are some birds which prey upon land-animals, others upon fishes, and others upon creatures of their own species.

That brute animals are excellently adapted to the use of man, and were, therefore, made to be subservient to the use of man, man will not deny. The strength of some, and the sagacity of others, are as much at our command, and are as effectually employed for our use, as if they belonged to ourselves. We can even turn to our advantage every passion of their nature; so that we can safely repose the greatest confidence in many of them. They are the guardians of our possessions and of our lives. They even enter into our resentments, and, at our instigation, take part in our revenge.

Having now advanced to man, the chief of this lower creation, and shown that all creatures of the vegetable, and merely animal, nature live and die for his use; pride might bid us here break off the chain of mutual relations and uses; which we have been pursuing thus far, and leave man in the en-

joyment of his superiority : but, beside that it is contrary to the analogy of nature, in which we see nothing but what has innumerable secondary relations and uses, that *man* only should be made for himself;

2. The situation of man in this world, or the external circumstances of human nature, still oblige us to assert, with Paul, that *no man liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself*. Man himself is but a link, though the highest link, of this great chain, all the parts of which are closely connected by the hand of our divine author. Nay, the more various and extensive are our powers, either for action or enjoyment, on that very account the more multiplied and extensive are our wants : so that, at the same time that they are marks of our superiority to, they are bonds of our connexion with, and signs of our dependence upon, the various parts of the world around us, and of our subservience to one another.

In fact, every time that we gratify any of our senses, though it be in consequence of the exertion of our own powers, we are reminded (if we will be so just to ourselves as to take the hint) of our dependence upon something without us. For the means of our gratifications are, in all cases, evidently without ourselves.

If we be served by the vegetables and the animals which this earth affords, we are obliged, in our turn,

turn, to favour their propagation, to promote their cultivation, and to preserve them in a healthy and vigorous state : and employment of this kind doth, in fact, take up a great part of our attention and labour. We must make the creature in some measure happy, if we would be effectually served by it. And the attention which domestic animals give to us, and their anxiety for us, is not to be compared to the attention we bestow on them, and the anxiety we undergo on their account.

But my subject leads me to attend to the connexion which man has with man, rather than with the inferior part of the creation ; though it seemed not improper to point out that. In general, nothing can be more obvious than the mutual dependence of men on one another. We see it in the most barbarous countries, where the connexions of mankind are the fewest and the slightest. This dependence is more sensible, indeed, in a state of infancy, when the least remission of the care of others would be fatal to us ; but it is as real and necessary, and even vastly more extensive, though less striking, when we are more advanced in life, especially in civilized countries. And the more perfect is the state of civil society, the more various and extended are the connexions which man has with man, and the less able is he to subsist comfortably without the help of others.

The business of human life, where it is enjoyed

in perfection, is subdivided into so many parts (each of which is executed by different hands) that a person who would reap the benefit of all the arts of life in perfection must employ, and consequently be dependent upon, thousands: he must even be under obligations to numbers of whom he has not the least knowledge.

These connexions of man with man are every day growing more extensive. The most distant parts of the earth are now connected: every part is every day growing still more necessary to every other part. And the nearer advances we make to general happiness, and the more commodious our circumstances in this world are made for us, the more intimately and extensively we become connected with, and the more closely we are dependent upon, one another.

By thus tracing the progress of man to that state of happiness which he now enjoys, we may be led to think, that, in pursuing it still farther to a more happy state of being, adapted to our social natures, we shall find ourselves still more variously and intimately connected with, and more closely dependent upon, one another; which affords a far nobler and more pleasing prospect to a person of an enlarged mind, and of a social and benevolent disposition, than he could have from supposing, that after death all our mutual connexions will be broken, and that every good man will be made transcendently

ently happy within himself, having no intercourse, or, however, no necessary intercourse, with any being beside his maker.

By these arguments, which are drawn from facts that are obvious to every person who attends to the external circumstances of mankind, it is plain that no man *can* live of himself; and even that the rich are, in fact, more dependent upon others than the poor; for, having more wants, they have occasion for more, and more frequent supplies. Now, it will easily be allowed, that every reason why we cannot live *of* ourselves is an argument why we ought not to live *to* ourselves: for certainly no person receives an obligation, but he ought to confer one. Every connexion must, in some measure, be mutual. And, indeed, the circulation of good offices would in a great measure cease, if the passage were not as open, and as free from obstruction, in one part of the common channel as another. The rich, if they would receive the greatest advantages from society, must contribute to the happiness of it. If they act upon different maxims, and think to avail themselves of the pleasures of society without promoting the good of it, they will never know the true pleasures of society. And, in the end, they will be found to have enjoyed the least themselves, who have least contributed to the enjoyment of others.

Thus it appears from a view of the external circumstances

circumstances of mankind, that man was not made to live to himself. The same truth may be inferred,

3. From a nearer inspection of the principles of human nature, and the springs of human actions.

If any man look into himself, and consider the springs and motives of his own actions, he will find that there are principles in his nature which would be of no use, were the intercourse he has with his fellow-creatures cut off; for that both the efficient and final causes of their operations are without himself. They are views of mankind, and their situations, which call those principles into action. And if we trace the operation of them, we shall clearly see that, though they be strictly connected with private happiness, their ultimate and proper object is the happiness of society.

What other account can we give of that impulse, which we all, more or less, feel for society? And whence is that restless and painful dissatisfaction which a man feels when he is long excluded from it, but that, in such a solitary condition, his faculties have not their proper exercise, and he is, as it were, out of his proper element?

Whence is that quick sensibility which we are conscious of with respect to both the joys and the sorrows of our fellow-creatures, if their happiness or misery were a matter of indifference to us? Can we feel what is sometimes called the contagion of the

the passions, when we find that our minds contract a kind of gloom and heaviness in the company of the melancholy, and that this melancholy vanishes in company which is innocently cheerful, and question the influence of social connexions? Much less can the reality or the power of the social principle be doubted, when a fellow-creature in distress calls forth the most exquisite feelings of compassion, attended with instant and strong efforts towards his relief.

So essential a part of our nature are these social passions, that it is impossible for any man wholly to escape the influence of them; but if we would be witnesses of their strongest effects, and see them branched out into that beautiful subordination which corresponds to all the varieties of our mutual relations, we must look into domestic life. There we shall clearly see, that the most frequent and almost the only cause of a man's joys and sorrows are the joys and sorrows of others, and that the immediate aim of all his actions is the well-being and happiness of others.

Doth not the sense of honour in the human breast derive all its force from the influence which social connexions have over us? Of what use could it be but to beings formed for society? What do we infer from our dread of infamy, and from our being so strongly actuated by a passion for fame, and also from the universality and extent of this principle, but that our nature obliges us to keep up a regard
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to others in our whole conduct, and that the author of nature intended we should? And is it not a further evidence of the ultimate design of this principle, that, in general, the means of being distinguished, at least of gaining a solid and lasting reputation, among men, is to be useful to mankind; public utility being the most direct road to true fame?

Every noble and exalted faculty of our nature is either directly of a social nature, or tends to strengthen the social principle. Nothing can be more evident than that the dictates of conscience strongly enforce the practice of benevolence: and the pleasures of benevolence certainly constitute the greatest part of those pleasures which we refer to the moral sense. They must necessarily do so, while the foundation of all virtue and right conduct is the happiness of society: for then every reflection that we have done our duty must be the same thing as a reflection that we have contributed what was in our power to the good of our fellow-creatures.

Lastly, of what doth devotion itself consist, but the exercise of the social affections? What are the dispositions of our minds which are called forth into action in private or public prayer, but reverence for true greatness, humility, gratitude, love, and confidence in God, as the greatest and best of Beings; qualities of the most admirable use and effect in social life?

I may

I may add, that not only are the highest and the worthiest principles of human conduct either truly social, or a reinforcement of the social principle, but even the lowest appetites and passions of our nature are far from being indifferent to social connexions, considerations, and influences. That the pleasures we receive from the fine arts, as those of music, poetry; and painting, and the like, are enjoyed but very imperfectly except in company, is very evident to all persons who have the least taste for those pleasures. I may even venture to say, that there is hardly a voluptuary, the most devoted to the pleasures of the table, but indulges himself with more satisfaction in company than alone.

Having given this general view of the social turn of our whole natures, whereby we are continually led out of ourselves in our pursuit of happiness; I shall now consider further, how all our appetites and passions, which are the springs of all our actions, do, in their own nature, tend to lead us out of ourselves, and how much our happiness depends upon our keeping their proper objects in view, and upon our minds being thereby constantly engaged upon something foreign to themselves; after which I shall show what are the fittest objects thus to engage our attention.

In order to preserve mutual connexion, dependence, and harmony among all his works, it has pleased

pleased our divine author to appoint, that all our appetites and desires, to whatever sense, external or internal, they be referred, should point to something beyond ourselves for their gratification; so that the idea of *self* is not in the least necessary to a state of the highest enjoyment.

When may men be said to be happy, but when their faculties are properly exercised in the pursuit of those things which give them pleasure? I say the pursuit rather than the enjoyment, not because enjoyment makes no part of our happiness, but because the vigorous and agreeable sensations with which our minds are impressed during the pursuit of a favourite object are generally, at least in this life, of vastly more consideration. The pleasure we receive the instant we arrive at the height of our wishes may be more exquisite, but the others are of much longer continuance; and, immediately upon the gratification of any of our desires, the mind is instantly reaching after some new object.

Supposing now the mind of any person to be fully and constantly engaged in the pursuit of a proper object, to the possession of which he is sensible he every day makes near approaches, and his desires be not so eager as to make him uneasy during the pursuit, what more is requisite to make him as happy as his nature can bear? He will not be the less happy because the object he is in pursuit of is foreign to himself; nor would it make him any happier to

have the idea of its contributing to his happiness. Nay, it may be shown, that it would be better for us, in general, with respect to real enjoyment, never to have the idea of the relation which the objects of our pursuit bear to ourselves: and this is most of all evident with respect to the higher pleasures of our nature, from which we derive our greatest happiness.

Our benevolence, for instance, leads us immediately to relieve and oblige others. Pleasure, indeed, always attends generous actions, and is consequent upon them; but the satisfaction we receive in our minds from having done kind offices to others is far less pure, and less perfectly enjoyed, if at all, when we had this, or any other private gratification in view before the action.

In like manner, he who courts applause, and does worthy actions solely with a view to obtain it, can have no knowledge of the genuine pleasure arising either from the good action itself, or the applause that is given to it; because he is sensible, in his own mind, that if those persons who praise his conduct were acquainted with the real motive of it, and knew that he meant nothing more, by his pretended acts of piety and benevolence, than to gain their applause, they would be so far from admiring and commending, that they would despise him for it.

It is evident, for the same reason, that no person

can enjoy the applause of his own mind, on the account of any action which he did with a view to gain it. The pleasures of a good conscience, or, as they are sometimes called, those of the moral sense, cannot be enjoyed but by a person who steadily obeys the dictates of his conscience, and uniformly acts the part which he thinks to be right, without any view to the pleasure and self-satisfaction which may arise from it.

The idea of *self*, as it is not adapted to gratify any of our appetites, and can contribute nothing towards their gratification, can only occasion anxiety, fear, and distrust about our happiness, when it is frequently the subject of our thoughts. The apprehension and dread of misery (which is certainly the occasion of most of the real trouble and misery of men in this life) is beyond measure increased from this source: and the effects of it are most sensibly felt both in the less and greater scenes of our lives.

It is chiefly an anxious solicitude about ourselves, and the appearance we shall make in the eyes of others, which is the cause of that affectation and constraint in behaviour which is so troublesome to a person's self, and so ridiculous in the eyes of others. This trifling remark, being so frequently verified, may serve to show that these sentiments are by no means merely speculative; but that they enter into the daily scenes of active life. Indeed they are in the highest sense practical, and upon them

them depend those maxims of conduct which contain the great secret of human happiness, and which are confirmed by every day's experience.

That the idea of *self* frequently occurring to our minds in our pursuit of happiness is often a real and great obstruction to it, will be more obvious from a short series of plain facts and examples, which I shall therefore mention.

Why are brute creatures, in general, so contented and happy in their low sphere of life, and much more so than the mind of man could be in their situation? Is it not because their views are perpetually fixed upon some object within their reach, adapted to their desires; and that the abstract idea of *self*, together with the notion of their being in the pursuit of happiness, and liable to be disappointed in that pursuit, never comes in their way, to interrupt the uniform and pleasurable exertion of their faculties in the pursuit of their proper objects?

The days of our infancy are happy for the same reason, notwithstanding the imperfection of our faculties, and the greater proportion of pains and disorders we are then liable to. Those years of our lives slide away in unmixed enjoyment; except when they are interrupted by the actual sensations of pain: for we are then incapable of suffering any thing from the *fear* of evil. It is not till after a considerable time that we get the abstract idea of *self*; an idea, which the brutes, probably, never

arrive at, and which is of excellent use to us, as will be shown in its proper place, in our pursuit of happiness, but is often abused to the great increase of our misery, as will appear by the facts we are now considering.

Why are persons whose situation in life obliges them to constant labour, either of body or mind, generally more happy than those whose circumstances do not lay them under a necessity to labour, and whose own inclination does not lead them to it; but because the former have their thoughts constantly employed in the pursuit of some end, which keeps their faculties awake, and fully exerted? And this is always attended with a state of vigorous, and consequently pleasurable sensations. Persons thus employed have not much leisure to attend to the idea of self, and that anxiety which always attends the frequent recurring of it; whereas a person who has no object foreign to himself, which constantly and necessarily engages his attention, cannot have his faculties fully exerted; and therefore his mind cannot possibly be in that state of vigorous sensation in which happiness consists.

The mind of such a person, having nothing without him sufficient to engage its attention, turns upon itself. He feels he is not happy, but he sees not the reason of it. This again excites his wonder, vexation, and perplexity. He tries new expedients; but, as these are only temporary, and
generally

generally whimsical choices, none of them have sufficient power to fix and confine his attention. He is still perpetually thinking about himself, and wondering and uneasy that he is not happy. This anxious perplexed state of mind, affecting the nervous system, necessarily occasions a more irritable state of the nerves, and of the brain, which makes the unhappy person subject to more frequent alarms, to greater anxiety and distress than before; till, these mental and bodily disorders mutually increasing one another, his condition is at length the most wretched and distressing that can be conceived. No bodily pain, no rack, no torture, can equal the misery and distress of a human being whose mind is thus a prey to itself. No wonder that, in this situation, many persons wish the utter extinction of their being, and often put a period to their lives.

This is certainly the most deplorable situation to which a human being can be reduced in this world, and is doubly the object of our compassion, when the disorder has its seat originally in the body, in such a manner, as that no endeavours to engage a man's thoughts upon other objects can force his attention from himself.

It is no wonder that we see more of this kind of unhappiness in the higher ranks of life, and among persons who are in what is called *easy circumstances*;

than in any other. Indeed, the case is hardly possible in any other than in easy circumstances: for, did a man's circumstances really find constant employment for his thoughts; were his business so urgent as to leave him no leisure for suspense and uncertainty what to do; it is plain, from the preceding principles, that such anxiety and distress could not take place. It is well known that the mind suffers more in a state of uncertainty and suspense, for want of some motive to determine a man's choice, than he can suffer in the vigorous prosecution of the most arduous undertaking. I appeal to men of leisure, and particularly to persons who are naturally of an active and enterprising disposition, for the truth of this fact.

These principles likewise, as is evident without entering into a detail of particulars, furnish us with a good reason why we generally see fathers and mothers of large families infinitely more easy, cheerful, and happy, than those persons who have no family-connexions. The greater affluence, ease, and variety of pleasures which these can command (subject to the inconveniences I have mentioned, and which are commonly visible enough in the case I refer to) are a poor equivalent for the necessary, constant, and vigorous exertion of their faculties, and consequently the strong sensations, and lively enjoyments, which a variety of family-care con-

jugal and parental tenderness, supply for the others.

This would be the case universally, where large families could subsist, if the parents had sufficient employment, and if an early-acquired taste for superfluities had not taken too deep root in their minds.

Happy is it for the world, and a great mark of the wisdom and goodness of divine providence, that men's minds are so constituted, that, though they be in easy circumstances, they are never completely satisfied. The passions of most men are still engaging them in a variety of pursuits, in which they are as eager, and which they prosecute with as much alacrity and earnestness, as if necessity compelled them to it. Otherwise, every person who could live easy would be inevitably miserable.

Infinitely happier would it be for themselves, and for the world, if all their pursuits were such as would give them satisfaction upon the reflection as well as in the pursuit, and be of real advantage to the rest of mankind; which two circumstances never fail to coincide. However, with regard to a person's self in this life, any end is unspeakably better than no end at all; and such is the wise appointment of providence, that bad ends tend, in a variety of ways, to check and defeat themselves, and so throw the minds of men into better, nobler, and more satisfactory pursuits; a consideration, which

which cannot fail to suggest, to a benevolent and pious mind, a prospect of a future happy and glorious state of things.

It may be said, that if happiness consist in, or depend upon, the exertion of our faculties upon some object foreign to ourselves, it is a matter of indifference what the object be. I answer, that during the pursuit it is nearly so; and universal experience, I imagine, will justify the observation. This is the reason why we see men equally eager, and equally happy, in the pursuit of a variety of things which appear trifling to one another. Thus the florist, the medalist, the critic, the antiquary, and every adept in the minuter branches of science, all enjoy equal happiness in the pursuit of their several objects; and as much as the historian, the astronomer, the moralist, or the divine, who refers his nobler studies to no higher end, and to whom they only serve as an exercise of his faculties.

But though an eager pursuit tends to keep the mind in a state of vigorous and lively sensation, that pursuit only can give us the *maximum*, the highest possible degree, of happiness, which has the following characters. It must be attended with the probability of success, consequently it must be generally successful; and it must also terminate in such gratifications as are least inconsistent with themselves, or with the other gratifications of which our nature makes us capable. And it may be demonstrated

monstrated (though I shall not undertake to do it particularly in this place) that no pursuits answer to this description but those in which the love of mankind, the love of God, or the dictates of conscience, engage us.

For, in all other pursuits, such as those of sensual pleasure, the pleasures of imagination, and ambition, we are liable to frequent disappointments; the gratifications in which they terminate are inconsistent with themselves, and with each other; and they almost entirely deaden and disqualify the mind for the nobler pleasures of our nature. It is the love of God, the love of mankind, and a sense of duty, which engage the minds of men in the noblest of all pursuits. By these we are carried on with increasing alacrity and satisfaction. Even the pains and distresses in which we involve ourselves by these courses are preferable to the pleasures attending the gratification of our lower appetites.

Besides, these noble pursuits, generally at least, allow us even more of the lower gratifications of our nature than can be obtained by a direct pursuit of them. For a little experience will inform us, that we receive the most pleasure from these lower appetites of our nature, as well as from the highest sources of pleasure which we are capable of, when we have their gratification least of all in view. There can be no doubt, for instance, but that the labourer, who eats and drinks merely to satisfy the calls of
hunger

happiness must necessarily govern our conduct with respect to all those virtues which are termed *private virtues*, as temperance, chastity, and every branch of self-government: but it always does harm as a motive to the *social virtues*. When, therefore, self-government, which is our first step towards happiness, is established, we ought to endeavour to excite men to action by higher and nobler motives. For, with regard to all those virtues, the ultimate object of which is not private happiness, an attention to self-interest is of manifest prejudice to us; and this through the whole course of our lives, imperfect as we are, and as much occasion as we have for every effectual motive to virtue.

We are now come, in the last place, to see what considerations drawn from the holy scriptures will further confirm and illustrate this maxim of human conduct which was first suggested by them.

That the scriptures join the voice of all nature around us, informing man that he is not made for himself; that they inculcate the same lesson which we learn both from a view of the external circumstances of mankind, and also from a nearer inspection of the principles of human nature, will be evident, whether we consider the object of the religion they exhibit (that is, the temper to which we are intended to be formed by it), or the motives by which it is enforced and recommended to us in them.

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That the end and design of our holy religion, christians, was to form us to the most disinterested benevolence, cannot be doubted by any person who consults the holy scriptures, and especially the books of the New Testament.

There we plainly see the principle of benevolence represented, when it is in its due strength and degree, as equal in point of intenseness to that of self-love. *Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.* The plain consequence of this is, that if all our brethren of mankind with whom we are connected, have an equal claim upon us (since our connexions are daily growing more extensive, and we ourselves are consequently growing daily of less relative importance, in our own eyes), the principle of benevolence must in the end absolutely swallow up that of self-love.

The most exalted devotion, as even superior both to self-love and benevolence, is always every where recommended to us; and the sentiments of devotion have been shown greatly to aid, and, in fact, to be the same with, those of benevolence: and they must be so, unless it can be shown that we have some senses, powers, or faculties which respect the Deity only.

In order to determine men to engage in a course of disinterested and generous actions, every motive which is calculated to work upon human nature is employed. And as mankind in general are deeply

immersed in vice and folly, their hopes, but more especially their fears, are acted upon in the strongest manner by the prospect of rewards and punishments. Even temporal rewards and punishments were proposed to mankind in the earlier and ruder ages of the world. But, as our notions of happiness grow more enlarged, infinitely greater but indefinite objects of hope and fear are set before us. Something unknown, but something unspeakably dreadful, in a future world, is perpetually held up to us, as a guard against the allurements to vice and excess which the world abounds with. And still further to counteract their baleful influences, the heavenly world (the habitation of good men after death) is represented to us as a place in which we shall be completely happy, enjoying something which is described as more than eye hath seen, ear heard, or than the heart of man can conceive.

These motives are certainly addressed to the principle of self-interest, urging us, out of a regard to ourselves and our general happiness, *to cease to do evil, and learn to do well*. And, indeed, no motives of a more generous nature, and drawn from more distant considerations, can be supposed sufficient to influence the bulk of mankind, and *bring them from the power of sin, and Satan, unto God*.

But when, by the influence of these motives, it may be supposed that mankind are in some measure recovered

recovered from the grosser pollutions of the world, and the principle of self-interest has been played, as it were, against itself, and been a means of engaging us in a course and habit of actions which are necessarily connected with, and productive of, more generous and noble principles, than these nobler principles are those which the sacred writers chiefly inculcate.

Nothing is more frequent with the sacred writers, than to exhort men to the practice of their duty as the command of God, from a principle of love to God, of love to Christ, and of love to mankind, more especially of our fellow-christians; and from a regard to the interest of our holy religion: motives which do not at all turn the attention of our minds upon themselves. This is not borrowing the aid of self-love to strengthen the principles of benevolence and piety; but it is properly deriving additional strength to these noble dispositions, as it were, from within themselves, independent of foreign considerations.

We may safely say, that no degree or kind of self-love is made use of in the scriptures, but what is necessary to raise us above that principle. And some of the more refined kinds of self-love, how familiar soever they may be in some systems of morals, never come in sight there. We are never exhorted in the scriptures to do benevolent actions for the sake of the reflex pleasures of benevolence,

or pious actions with a view to the pleasures of devotion. This refined kind of self-love is no where to be found in the scriptures.

Even the pleasures of a good conscience, though they be of a more general nature, and there be less refinement in them than in some other pleasures which are connected with the idea of *self*, and though they be represented in the scriptures as the consequence of good actions, and a source of joy as a testimony of a person's being in the favour of God, and in the way to happiness, are perhaps never directly proposed to us as the reward of virtue. This motive to virtue makes a greater figure in the system of the later stoics (those heathen philosophers who, in consequence of entertaining the most extravagant idea of their own merit, really idolized their own natures to a degree absolutely blasphemous) than in the scriptures. And if we consider the nature of this principle, we shall soon be sensible, that if it be inculcated as a motive to virtue, and particularly the virtues of a sublimer kind it should be with great caution, and in such a manner as shall have the least tendency to encourage self-applause. For, does not self-applause border very nearly upon pride and self-conceit, and that species of it which is called spiritual pride, and which is certainly a most malignant disposition?

If this same principle have power to excite supercilious vanity, intolerable arrogance, inveterate rancour

rancour, and supercilious contempt of others, when it has nothing but the trifling advantage of skill in criticism, a talent for poetry, a taste for belles lettres, or some other of the minuter parts of science, to avail itself of; what have we not to dread from it, when it can boast of what is universally acknowledged to be a far superior kind of excellence!

To guard against this dangerous rock, so fatal to every genuine principle of virtue, the utmost humility, self-diffidence, and trust in God, are ever recommended to us in the holy scriptures. Good men are taught to regard him as the giver of every good and every perfect gift. They are represented as disclaiming all the merit of their own good works, and expecting all favour and happiness, private or public, from the free goodness and undeserved mercy of God. *When we have done all that is commanded us, we must say we are unprofitable servants, we have done only that which it was our duty to do.*

In the representation which our Saviour has given us of the proceedings of the last great day of judgment, it is in this respect that the temper of the righteous is contrasted with that of the wicked, though that was not the principal design of the representation. The righteous seem surprised at the favourable opinion which their judge expresses of them, and absolutely disclaim all the

good works which he ascribes to them. *When saw we thee, say they, hungry, and fed thee; or thirsty, and gave thee drink; when saw we thee a stranger and took thee in, or naked and clothed thee; when saw we thee sick and in prison, and came unto thee?* Whereas the wicked are represented as equally surpris'd at the censure our Lord passes upon them, and insist upon their innocence; saying, *When saw we thee hungry, or thirsty, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee?*

This, too, is the excellent moral conveyed to us in the parable of the pharisee and the publican; and the import of one of the blessings which our Lord pronounced in a solemn manner at the beginning of his ministry on earth, *Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven*; and also the spirit of many of our Lord's invectives against the pride and hypocrisy of the scribes and pharisees.

No other vice seems capable of disturbing the equal and generous temper of our Lord. Other vices rather excite his compassion: but pride, together with its usual attendant hypocrisy, never fails to rouse his most vehement indignation; insomuch that, before we attend to the heinous nature and dreadful consequences of those vices, we are apt rather to blame our Lord for intemperate wrath upon these occasions, and to wonder why a person, who

who otherwise appears to be so meek, should, in this case only, be so highly provoked.

How severely doth he check the least tendency towards pride and ambition in his own disciples, whenever he discovers in any of them a disposition to aspire to distinction and superiority ! closing his admonition, on one remarkable occasion, with these words, which are characteristic of the temper of his religion ; Matt. xxiii. 11, 12. *He that is greatest among you shall be your servant : Whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted ?*

What temper can be supposed more proper to qualify us for joining the glorious assembly of the spirits of just men made perfect, and perhaps innumerable orders of beings far superior to us both in understanding and goodness, when all the splendour of the invisible world shall be thrown open to us, but a spirit of the deepest humility, and the purest benevolence ? This alone can dispose us truly to rejoice in the view of every kind and degree of excellence wherever found, without the least uneasiness arising from pride, envy, jealousy, or dislike ; all which vicious qualities of the mind are nearly connected together. And how can a spirit of true humility and pure benevolence, which cannot exist without humility, be attained, if our regards be perpetually, or frequently, directed to ourselves ? Where *self* is considered, pride, vanity,
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or self-conceit, with all their hateful consequences, seem, in some degree, to be unavoidable.

Whoever, therefore, lays the foundation of human virtue on the principle of self-interest, or, what is nearly the same thing, self-applause, is erecting a fabric which can never rest on such supports ; and he will be found in fact to have been pulling down with one hand what he was endeavouring to build up with the other.

To draw to a conclusion. This doctrine abounds with the noblest practical uses, and points out directly the great rule of life, and source of happiness ; which is, to give ourselves wholly up to some employment, which may, if possible, engage all our faculties, and which tends to the good of society. This is a field which is open to the exertion of all human powers, and in which all mankind may be equally, mutually, and boundlessly happy.

This will render all expedients to *kill time* unnecessary. With our affections and our faculties thus engrossed by a worthy object, we scarcely need to fear being ever dull, pensive, or melancholy, or to know what it is to have our time hang heavy upon our hands. And I think I may so far presume upon the known connexion of mind and body, as to say, that this is the best preservative against hypochondriacal disorders, to which persons whose situation in the world doth not lead them into the active scenes of life are peculiarly subject. Every day passed in the
steady

steady and earnest discharge of a man's known duty will pass with uniform cheerfulness and alacrity. And in the glorious animating prospect of a future happy state of mankind, on which, in a humble trust and confidence in the assistance and grace of God, he has spent all his cares and exerted all his powers, that joy will spring up in his heart here, which will hereafter be *unspeakable and full of glory*.

If troubles and persecutions arise on account of our adhering to our duty ; if we be opposed in the prosecution of laudable undertakings, or suffer in consequence of undertaking them ; the true piety of a person who habitually lives to God, and not to himself, is capable of converting them all into pure unmixed joy and transport. Then the human mind, roused to the most intense exertion of all its faculties, burdened with no consciousness of guilt, referring itself absolutely to the disposal of its God and father, distrusting its own powers, and confiding in the infinite power, wisdom, and goodness of God, acquires a fervour of spirit, a courage, fortitude, and magnanimity, tempered with the most perfect serenity, and the greatest presence of mind, that is sufficient, and more than sufficient, to bear a man through every difficulty, and even to convert all pain into pleasure. His highly agitated state of mind, in those trying circumstances, is almost pure rapture and ecstasy.

In those circumstances, which appear so distressing,
numbers,

numbers, I doubt not, have been able, according to our blessed Saviour's direction, to *rejoice and be exceedingly glad, knowing that their reward was great in heaven*; and have experienced more real comfort, peace of mind, and inward joy, in the greatest adversity, than they had ever felt in the days of their prosperity. Yea, what is related by historians of some christian and protestant martyrs appears to me not incredible; namely, that in the midst of flames they have felt no pain. Their minds were so intensely agitated, and so wholly occupied with opposite sensations of the most exalted nature, as to exclude all external sensation whatever, vastly more than we can form any idea of from the trances and reveries which any person was ever subject to.

What the extraordinary exercises of devotion are able to do upon extraordinary occasions, the habitual moderate exercise of piety will be able to do in the ordinary course and the common troubles of our lives; so that it may not only be compared to a strong cordial, to be applied when the mind is ready to faint under adversity, but to that food which is the daily support of our lives.

To have God always in our thoughts, is not possible in this world. Present objects, to the influence of which we are continually exposed, must necessarily engage a great part of our attention; and worldly objects, by continually engrossing our thoughts, are apt to become of too great importance

ance to us. We grow anxious about them, and our minds are harassed and fatigued with a constant and close attention to them. Now, it is when the mind is in this state, or rather tending towards it, that the benign influences of devotion are, in the ordinary course of our lives, the most sensibly felt; when the mind, looking off, and above all worldly objects, and deeply impressed with a sense of the infinite power, wisdom and goodness of God, unburdens itself of every anxiety, and casts all its cares upon its heavenly father; and when the preceding tumult and disorder in the passions only serves to augment that unspeakable joy, satisfaction and confidence, with which a deep sense of the presence and providence of God inspires the soul.

The relief which a benevolent mind feels from communicating its troubles and cares to an intimate friend, in whose wisdom and integrity he can confide, though of the same nature, is but a faint image of what the truly pious soul feels in the delightful seasons of the devout intercourse which he maintains with his God.

This is a perpetual source of joy and satisfaction to a truly devout mind, which the wicked, those persons who live to themselves and not to mankind, or to God, intermeddle not with. Not even an idea of that sweet tranquillity, exalted joy, and calm fortitude which true devotion inspires, can be communicated to another who hath had no experience of it himself.

This

This is true of those things of which St. Paul says that *the animal man cannot comprehend them, and that they are foolishness to him, because they are spiritually discerned.*

I would be no advocate for enthusiasm. The fervour of devotion cannot always be kept up. That is inconsistent with the condition of our nature, and far from being necessary in our present state: but that cheerful serenity and composure in which moderate acts of devotion leave the mind, is an excellent temper for entering upon, and persevering with spirit and alacrity in, any useful and honourable undertaking.

The sum of this practical doctrine, suggested by revelation, and confirmed by reason and observation, is, that NO MAN CAN BE HAPPY WHO LIVES TO HIMSELF; BUT THAT TRUE HAPPINESS CONSISTS IN HAVING OUR FACULTIES WHOLLY ENGROSSED BY SOME WORTHY OBJECT, IN THE PURSUIT OF WHICH THE STRONGEST AND BEST OF OUR AFFECTIONS HAVE THEIR FULL PLAY, AND IN WHICH WE ENJOY ALL THE CONSISTENT PLEASURES OF OUR WHOLE NATURE; that though a regard to our greatest happiness be of excellent use, particularly about the beginning of our progress towards perfection and happiness, in bringing our inferior appetites and passions into due subjection to the superior powers of our nature; yet that self-love, and a regard to ourselves, is very apt to grow too intense, and is in fact the cause

eat deal of the useless anxiety, perplexity, and which is in the world; and that therefore it to be our care, that our minds be engrossed as as possible by other objects; and that even s to virtue which turn our attention frequently ourselves should be used with caution; for fear ing that vanity and self-conceit which we ought ly every method of repressing, as the greatest of true religion, being most opposite to the ie temper of christianity, and most destructive nan happiness.

not make a better application of this general i of conduct, namely, to propose to ourselves, a the language of Solomon, *to pursue with all ght*, some worthy object, some honourable and employment, especially in the present circum- s of things among us, than in encouraging you, ethren in the ministry, to prosecute with vigour xcellent scheme in which you have already so much laudable zeal, and have made so suc- a progress. I need not add, that I mean the e of a provision for the more comfortable sup- ministers' widows and orphans.

s particular subject has the easiest and happiest xion imaginable with the general one I have discussing; as it is both a worthy and benevolent taking itself, and is designed for the relief of those is who have shown themselves to be actuated by me excellent sentiments; of persons who have

not lived to themselves, but to society ; who have entered into the social connexions of life, and who have exposed themselves and families to peculiar hardships in consequence of those honourable connexions.

If any set of duties shine with peculiar lustre, and make a greater figure than the rest, in our holy religion, they are those of humanity and compassion. Through all the books both of the Old and New Testament, they are the most frequently, and the most earnestly, inculcated of any particular duties : doubtless, because they are of the strongest obligation in themselves, the finest exercise for our faculties (having the greatest tendency to advance the perfection of our nature), and the best adapted to promote the ease and happiness of mankind in general.

The Divine Being himself is always represented as taking particular notice of the treatment which the poor and distressed meet with. He hath styled himself the *father of the fatherless, and the widow's God*: and therefore, when we undertake those humane and kind offices, we may, with more propriety than in any other sphere, consider ourselves as acting the glorious part of God's deputies, and as stewards of the divine grace and goodness here below.

If we be obliged to contribute of our substance to the relief of the distressed, much more is it incumbent upon us not to withhold our labour and our interest in the prosecution of proper schemes for their relief. And the method in which it is proposed to relieve the

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the distressed persons we have now under consideration is one that is quite free from all the difficulties which lie in the way of common charities (though the objections to common charities have no weight in this particular case), and a method which is, in all cases, the most eligible, when it can be pursued with effect; namely, to put those persons whose circumstances are distressing, or liable to be so, in the way of relieving themselves. It is to exert our humanity in the way of encouraging, if not industry, at least frugality.

This, consequently, is a method which will relieve the minds of the distressed of a burthen which is often less tolerable than most kinds of calamity, namely, the sense of dependence and obligation. It may be a false kind of delicacy which makes some persons so extremely sensible upon these occasions: but it is a sensibility which only the most amiable and deserving persons are subject to; and there is certainly a peculiar propriety in attending to this circumstance in the case before us.

Who are, generally, the unhappy widows whose case we are now considering, but persons who have been brought up in easy and genteel circumstances, and whose small fortunes, joined to the income of their husbands, and managed with great frugality, have been just sufficient to bring up a family in that decent and reputable manner, in which a regard to their station in life, and to the congregations in whose service their husbands were engaged, are uni-

verfally acknowledged to require? Thefe unhappy perfons, therefore, are reduced at once, upon the death of their hufbands, and the great reduction, if not total ceafing, of their incomes (which is the immediate confequence of that event), to one of the moft diftreffing fituations that can occur in human life.

Here is to be feen the deepeft affliction for the lofs of that companion and friend for whole fake they had facrificed perhaps better profpects, and fituations in which it would have been more in their power to fupport themfelves and families in the like circumftances; the greateft indigence, to which they have never been accuftomed, with which they are therefore wholly unprepared to encounter, and which, in their time of life, they are utterly incapable of remedying; and all this joined with that generofity of fentiment, infpired by their education, and cherifhed by the company and acquaintance they have always kept up, to which relief itfelf is diftreffing, unlefs conferred with the greateft prudence and delicacy.

To augment the diftrefs of thefe difconfoiate widows, they fee nothing before them but a number of children educated in the fame decent and frugal manner in which their parents were obliged to live, with expectations (if they be of an age capable of having any) almoft unavoidably above their rank and fortune, wholly unprovided for, and deftitute, in a great meafure, of their fathers' intereft and friendships,

ships, on which were founded all their expectations of being introduced with tolerable prospects into the world.

Here then, my brethren, are the worthiest objects of charity, and here is the most unexceptionable and desirable method of bestowing it; so that no circumstance seems wanting to engage every benevolent and public-spirited person to join heartily in a scheme which is calculated for so excellent a purpose.

Consider, my brethren, how many worthy persons are anxious about the prudence and the vigour of your present resolutions; with what tender and heart-piercing concern the worthy and pious parent regards the wife of his bosom, and the children of his love, when he feels the symptoms of his own declining nature, and dreads to communicate the alarming intelligence; and how earnestly he wishes it may be in his power to do something, while living, which, when he is dead, may be the means of providing a small substitute for the fruit of his present labours; when, alas! no substitute can be provided for himself, for his advice, his instructions, his consolations, the charms of his conversation, and all his personal kind offices. Of what a load of anxiety and distress, which tends to hasten the dreaded event, would this scheme ease the worthiest and most considerate of human minds!

Consider also, how many persons, the best qualified

to bear their parts with propriety and honour in social life, and to exhibit the finest example of the several relative and domestic duties to others, and who are thereby capable of having their own usefulness greatly extended, are restrained from engaging in social connexions by that peculiar tenderness and humanity, which a liberal education, and a life devoted to the service of a benevolent religion, inspires; and also by that very prudence, which would eminently contribute to their fulfilling the most important duties of it in the most exemplary manner.

So excellent an undertaking will doubtless be its own sufficient reward; and if *the fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much*, what good may you not reasonably expect that the devout blessings and fervent prayers of the many excellent persons interested in your present resolutions will procure you, from that God *who is able to make all grace abound towards you, and to supply all your wants, out of his abundant fulness in Christ Jesus?*

Let us then, my brethren, *be steadfast and unmoveable in this, as well as always abounding in every good work; forasmuch as we know that our labour shall not be in vain in the Lord.*

S E R M O N VII.

OF THE DANGER OF BAD HABITS.

HOSEA iv. 17.

EPHRAIM IS JOINED TO IDOLS. LET HIM
ALONE.

EPHRAIM is here put for the whole kingdom of Israel, of which it was a part; and this awful sentence pronounced upon it was delivered during its declension, and not long before its final dissolution by the kings of Assyria.

Many prophets had God sent to this unhappy nation, and by repeated messages had he expostulated with them, from time to time, for their crying wickedness and provocations. They had had *line upon line*, and *precept upon precept*; but all had been to no purpose. They showed no sign of repentance, but *beld fast their iniquity*, and *would not let it go* till the divine patience and forbearance were wearied out. Mercy could plead for them no longer, their fate was determined; and the execution of the just judgments of God upon them was only delayed, but was sure to take place in the end.

This is the case of a whole nation abandoned of God in this fearful manner. But whatever has been the case of one nation may not only be the case of another

another nation, but also that of any *individual*; and it is the possibility of this being the case of our own nation, or of ourselves, that makes it to demand our attention. To the Almighty, with respect to moral government, a nation is as one man, and one man as a whole nation. He punishes vice, and he rewards virtue, in both; and whatever is agreeable to wisdom and equity in the case of a nation is likewise agreeable to wisdom and equity with respect to individuals. Supposing, therefore, that the cases are exactly similar, I shall, in discoursing from these words, First, State the case with as much exactness as I can;

Secondly, Show the probability and danger of it with respect to human nature; and

Thirdly, Consider the equity and propriety of it with respect to God; applying the whole doctrine to the cases of individuals.

In the first place, I am to state this case with as much exactness as I can.

In general, when any person is in the condition of Ephraim in my text, so that God shall, as it were, say of him, *he is joined to idols* (he is joined to his lusts and vices), *let him alone*, his day of trial and probation may be said to be, to all important purposes, expired. He is no longer a *subject of moral government*, because he is utterly incapable of *amendment*, which is the end of all moral discipline; and though, through the goodness of God, which is over all his works, he
may

may live many years longer, yet his final doom is in reality fixed ; his sentence is irrevocable, and the execution of it only deferred.

Not that the reformation of any sinner is ever *naturally impossible*, or that, if he truly repent, he shall not find favour at the hand of God. For *nothing is impossible with God*, and a *truly humble, penitent, and contrite heart* he will never despise, whenever and wheresoever he finds it. But the change may be *morally impossible*, or not to be expected according to the usual course of things ; and this is sufficient to authorize us to make use of the language.

Supposing a man to have lived so long in the habits of vice, as to have lost all relish for every thing that is good, that he has no pleasure in the company of the sober, the virtuous, and the pious, but only in that of those who are as abandoned as himself, and that the greatest satisfaction he has is in corrupting others (and further than this depravity cannot go) ; supposing that, in the course of his life, this man, besides every advantage for *instruction*, had experienced a great variety of prosperity and adversity ; and yet that prosperity, instead of making him more thankful and obedient to God, made him forget him the more ; and that afflictions, instead of softening and bettering his heart, only served to harden it, and make it worse : Do I say that this abandoned wretch *cannot* be reformed, that God cannot, by any methods whatever, work upon his heart, and bring him to serious thought

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and reflection? By no means. That would be to limit the power of God, to whom all things are possible. He can work *miracles*, if he should think proper so to do. But then I say this would be a proper miracle, such as, at this day, we are not authorized to expect. And judging by what we see actually to take place, and what we must conclude to be just and right, God *may*, and probably *will*, leave such a one to himself. He may determine to try him no longer by any of those methods of his providence which are usually employed for the purpose of reclaiming sinners.

For instance, afflictions, and especially bodily sicknesses, are a great means of softening and bettering the minds of men : but God may resolve that he shall be visited with no remarkable sickness, till he be overtaken with his last ; or he may cut him off by a sudden and unexpected death, in the midst of his crimes. The death of our friends, or any calamities befalling them, have often been the means, in the hands of divine providence, of bringing to serious thought and reflection those who have survived those strokes ; but God may resolve never to touch him in so tender a part, but rather make use of his death as a warning and example to others.

Now, when a man is thus *left of God*, and no providential methods are used to reclaim him, we may conclude that he is irrecoverably lost. It is in fact, and according to the course of nature (and we know of no deviations from it since the age of the apostles),
absolutely

absolutely impossible that he should repent, or be reformed. And though he should continue to live ever so long after God has thus forsaken him, he is only, in the awful language of scripture, *treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath; and there remains nothing for him but a fearful looking for of judgment, and of that fiery indignation which shall consume the adversaries of God.*

Having thus stated the nature of this awful case, and shown in what sense, and on what account, it may be said that it is quite desperate and hopeless, viz. because it may be morally impossible that he should ever truly repent and be reformed, by reason of God's withdrawing those providential methods by which he uses to work upon men's hearts, and to bring them to serious thought and reflection, I come

2dly, To consider the *probability* and *danger* of the case with respect to human nature; how far men are liable to fall into this fearful condition, and by what means they fall into it.

A man's case may be pronounced to be thus desperate, when his mind is brought into such a state as that the necessary means of reformation shall have lost their effect upon him; and this is the natural consequence of confirmed habits of vice, and a long-continued neglect of the means of religion and virtue; which is so far from being an impossible or improbable case, that it is a very general one.

In order to be the more sensible of this, you are to consider

consider that vice is a *habit*, and therefore of a subtle and insinuating nature. By easy, pleasing, and seemingly harmless actions, men are often betrayed into a *progress*, which grows every day more alarming. Our virtuous resolutions may break with difficulty. It may be with pain and reluctance that we commit the *first acts* of sin, but the *next* are easier to us; and use, custom, and habit, will at last reconcile us to any thing, even things the very idea of which might at first be shocking to us.

Vice is a thing not to be trifled with. You may, by the force of vigorous resolution, break off in the early stages of it; but *habits*, when they have been confirmed, and long continued, are obstinate things to contend with, and are hardly ever entirely subdued. When bad habits *seem* to be overcome, and we think we have got rid of our chains, they may perhaps only have become, as it were, *invisible*; so that when we thought we had recovered our freedom, and strength, so as to be able to repel any temptation, we may lose all power of resistance on the first approach of it.

A man who has contracted a habit of vice, and been abandoned to sinful courses for some time, is never out of danger. He is exactly in the case of a man who has long laboured under a chronical disease, and is perpetually subject to a relapse. The first shock of any disorder a man's constitution may bear, and, if he be not naturally subject to it, he may perfectly

fully recover, and be out of danger. But when the general habit is such, as that a *relapse* is apprehended, a man's friends and physicians are alarmed for him.

The reason is, that a relapse does not find a person in the condition in which he was when the first fit of illness seized him. That gave his constitution a shock, and left him enfeebled, so as to be less able to sustain another shock; and especially if it be more violent than the former, as is generally the case in those disorders.

In the very same dangerous situation is the man who has ever been addicted to vicious courses. He can never be said to be *perfectly recovered*, whatever appearances may promise, but is always in danger of a fatal relapse. He ought, therefore, to take the greatest care of himself. He is not in the condition of a person who has *never known the ways of wickedness*. He ought, therefore, to have the greatest distrust of himself, and set a double watch over his thoughts, words, and actions, for fear of a surprise. For if once, through the force of any particular temptation, he should fall back into his former vicious courses, and his former disposition should return, his case will probably be desperate. He will plunge himself still deeper in wickedness; and his having abstained for a time will only, as it were, have whetted his appetite, and make him swallow down the poison of sin by larger and more eager draughts than ever.

Such persons may be so entirely in the power of

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vicious

vicious habits, that they shall be in no sense *their own masters*. They may even see the danger they are in, wish to free themselves from the habits they have contracted, and yet find they have no force, or resolution, to relieve themselves. They are not to be rescued from *the snare of the destroyer*, and brought to their *right mind*, but by some uncommon and alarming providence, which is in the hands of God, and which he may justly withhold when his patience and long-suffering have been much abused. Justly may he say to such an habitual sinner, as he did to Ephraim in my text; *He is joined to idols*, he is joined to his lusts, *let him alone*. He is determined to have the *pleasure of sin*, let him receive the *wages of sin* also.

This brings me to the third head of my discourse, in which I propose to consider the equity of the proceeding with respect to God.

It may be said that it is not agreeable to equity for God to favour some with the means of improvement, and suffer others to abandon themselves to destruction without a possibility of escaping. But I answer, that the persons whose case I have been describing have had, and have outlived, their *day of grace*. God has long exercised forbearance towards them, but they have wearied it out; and it could not be expected to last for ever. They have had gracious invitations to repentance, but they have slighted them all: they *stopped their ears*, and *refused to return*. They have been tried with a great variety both of merciful and
of

of afflictive providences, but they made no good use of them. *Why then, as the prophet says, should they be stricken any more, when they will only revolt more and more ?*

A day of trial and probation, or what is frequently called a *day of grace*, must necessarily have some period ; else, when would the time of retribution, when would the time of rewards and punishments, take place ? A state of trial necessarily respects some future state, in which men must receive according to their deeds. But this state of trial it has pleased God to make of uncertain duration, no doubt to keep us always watchful, having our accounts always in readiness, because *in such an hour as we think not our Lord may come*, and require them. The state of trial, therefore, is with some of much longer duration than it is with others ; and God is the sovereign arbiter of every thing relating to it. He makes our lives longer or shorter, as seems good in his sight, and at death a state of trial ends of course. We may, therefore, as well pretend to question the justice and equity of God's cutting us off by death when and in what manner he pleases, as arraign his justice in scaling up our doom, though while we live, whenever he pleases.

No doubt God gives to every person a sufficient trial ; for *he is not willing that any should perish*, but *bad rather that all should come to repentance*. We may therefore assure ourselves, that he will not cease to endeavour to promote the reformation of a sinner by all

proper means, till he shall become absolutely incorrigible, and the methods taken to reclaim him would be abused and lost. And if we consider that every means of improvement neglected adds to a man's guilt, and aggravates his condemnation, it may even appear to be mercy in the Divine Being to grant a person no further means of improvement, after it has been found, by actual trial, that they would only have been abused, and therefore have proved highly injurious to him. Not but that it might have been sufficient to silence every cavil of this kind, to say, as Paul does on a similar occasion, *Who art thou, O man, that repliest against God?* or with Abraham, *Shall not the judge of all the earth do that which is right?* But it is proper to show that *in the midst of judgment God remembers mercy.*

There is a very pathetic description of the case of a sinner, who, after a relapse into vicious courses, is justly abandoned of God, to seek his own destruction, in a parable of our Saviour's, formed upon the popular opinion of the Jews of his age concerning demons or evil spirits, Matt. xii. 43, &c. "When
 " the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh
 " through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none.
 " Then he saith, I will return to my house from
 " whence I came out; and when he is come, he
 " findeth it empty, swept, and garnished. Then
 " goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other
 " spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter
 " in,

"in, and dwell there; and the last state of that man is worse than the first." The application of this parable either to the case of the Jews (for whom it seems to have been originally intended) or to particular persons, who after a seeming reformation have relapsed into vicious courses, is too obvious to be particularly dwelt upon.

To come, therefore, to a general application of this doctrine; Let all persons who are sensible of the folly and evil of sinful courses, and of the danger of persisting in them, make a speedy and effectual retreat. Let us do nothing by halves. To be lukewarm in religion, is in effect to have no religion at all. We must *give God our hearts*; we must give him an undivided affection; for *we cannot truly love God and mammon*, or the world, at the same time. In this unsettled and fluctuating disposition, temptations will have a great advantage over us. We shall ever be in danger of throwing off all restraint, and of running into every kind of riot and excess, till nothing, on the part of divine providence shall occur to reclaim us.

In reality, my brethren, and to every valuable end and purpose, the term of our trial and probation does generally expire long before the term of our natural lives. For, how few are there whose *characters*, whose *dispositions*, or *habits of mind*, undergo any considerable change after they are grown to man's estate! Our *tempers* and general characters are usually fixed

as soon as we have fixed ourselves in a regular employment and mode of life. For, after this, we see almost every person continue the very same to the end of his life. Some remarkable providential occurrence, some fit of sickness, or some unforeseen misfortune of any kind, may alarm those who have been addicted to vicious courses, and for a time bring them to serious thought and reflection; but if they be turned thirty or forty years of age, how soon do the serious purposes, which they then form, go off, and their former modes of thinking and living return! Not only with respect to *temper* and *disposition of mind*, as it relates to virtue or vice, but with respect to those habits which are indifferent to morals, we see that, excepting one case perhaps in a thousand, they are not subject to change after the period that I have mentioned. Any habits that we contract early in life, any particular bias or inclination; any particular cast of thought, or mode of conversation; even any particular gesture of body, as in walking, sitting, &c. we are universally known by among our acquaintance, from the time that we properly *enter life* to the time that we have done with it; as much as we are by the tone of our voice, or our hand-writing, which likewise are of the nature of *habits*, or *customs*.

These observations may be applied in a great measure even to matters of *opinion*, (though, naturally, nothing seems to be more variable) as well

as to mental and corporeal *habits*. A man who has studied, or who fancies he has studied, any particular subject, sooner or later *makes up his mind*, as we say, with respect to it; and after this, all arguments, intended to convince him of his mistake, only serve to confirm him in his chosen way of thinking. An argument or evidence of any kind, that is entirely *new* to a man, may make a proper impression upon him; but if it has been often proposed to him, and he has had time to view and consider it, so as to have hit upon any method of evading the force of it, he is afterwards quite callous to it, and can very seldom be prevailed upon to give it any proper attention. This consideration accounts, in some measure, both for the great influence of christianity on its first publication, when the doctrines were *new* and *striking*, and also for the absolute indifference with which the same great truths are now heard in all christian countries.

It accounts also for the more striking effect of the preaching of the methodists than ours. They find people utterly ignorant, to whom the truths, the promises, and the threatenings, of the gospel are really *new*; whereas we have to do with persons who have heard them from their infancy, and have, alas, acquired a habit of disregarding them. But then our people, having, in general, been brought up in habits of virtue, such great changes of character and conduct are less necessary in their case. It is to be regretted, however, that they too seldom exceed that mediocrity

mediocrity of character which they acquire in early life: I speak of the generality among 'us. For others are remarkable exceptions, persons of *disinterested and heroic virtue*, in full proportion to the superior advantages which they enjoy.

The resistance which the mind makes to the admission of truth, when it has been strongly prejudiced against it, is evident both with respect to the belief of christianity in general, and of particular opinions relating to it. There are many persons, by no means defective with respect to *judgment* in other things, of whose conversion to christianity we can have no more reasonable expectation than of the sun rising in the west, even though they should consent to hear, or read, every thing that we could propose to them for that purpose. There are also many conscientious and intelligent roman-catholics, absurd as we justly think their principles to be, who would deliberately read the best defences of protestantism, without any other effect than that of being more confirmed in their prejudices against it. The same may be said of persons professing other modes of faith; so that their persuasions are not to be changed, except by such a method as that which was applied for the conversion of the apostle Paul. The same observation may also be applied to many opinions, and especially to a *general bias, or turn of thinking*, in matters of a political nature, and even in subjects of philosophy, or criticism.

Facts of this kind, of which we are all witnesses,
and

and which come within the observation of every day in our lives, show, in a very striking light, what care we ought to take in forming our *first judgments* of things, and in contracting our *first habits*, and therefore deserve the more especial attention of *young persons*. For we see that when these *principles* and *Habits* are once properly formed, they are generally fixed for life. Whatever is fact with respect to *man-kind in general*, we ought to conclude to be the case with respect to *ourselves*; that the cause is in the constitution of our *common nature*, and dependent upon the fundamental laws of it, and, no doubt, a wise and useful part of it; and we must not expect that *miracles* will be wrought in our favour.

To show that there is the greatest advantage, as well as some inconvenience, resulting from this *disposition to fixity*, as we call it, in our own nature, let it be observed; that if there was nothing *fixed* or *permanent* in the *human character*, we should find the same inconvenience as if any other law of nature was unsettled. We should be perpetually at a loss how to conduct ourselves, how to behave to mankind in general, and even to our own particular friends and acquaintance, especially after having been for any space of time absent from them. We do not expect to find persons the very same in all changes of condition or circumstances, as in sickness and health, prosperity and adversity, &c. but then we generally know

know what *kind of change* to expect in them in those circumstances, and we regulate our conduct towards them by our experience of the usual effect of similar changes.

These observations, when applied to *opinions*, may serve to amuse us, but when they are applied to *practice* they ought seriously to alarm us. Let all those, therefore, who, being at all advanced in life, see reason to be dissatisfied with themselves, with their disposition of mind, and their general conduct, be alarmed; for there is certainly the greatest reason for it, probably much more than they are themselves aware of. Persons in this state of mind always flatter themselves with a time when they shall have more leisure for repentance and reformation; but, judging from observation on others, which is the surest guide that they can follow (infinitely better than their own imaginations), they may conclude, that it is almost a certainty that such a time will never come.

If they should have the *leisure* for repentance and reformation which they promised themselves, it is not probable that sufficient *strength of resolution* will come along with it. Indeed, all resolutions to repent at a future time are necessarily insincere, and must be a mere deception; because they imply a preference of a man's present habits and conduct, that he is really *unwilling* to change them, and that nothing but necessity would lead him to make any attempt of the kind.

kind. In fact, he can only mean that he will discontinue *particular actions*; his *habits*, or *temper of mind*, remaining the same.

Besides, a real, effectual repentance, or reformation, is such a total change in a man, as cannot, in the nature of things, take place in a short space of time. A man's habits are formed by the scenes he has gone through, and the impressions which they have made upon him; and when death approaches, a man has not another life, like this, to live over again. He may, even on a death-bed, most sincerely *wish* that he had a pious and benevolent disposition, with the love of virtue in all its branches: but that *wish*, though it be ever so sincere and earnest, can no more produce a proper change in his mind, than it can restore him to health, or make him taller, or stronger, than he is.

The precise time when this confirmed state of mind takes place, or, in the language of scripture, the time when any person is thus *left of God*, or *left to himself*, cannot be determined. It is necessarily various and uncertain. But, in general, we may say, that when any person has been long abandoned to vicious courses, when vice is grown into a habit with him, and especially when his vices are more properly of a *mental nature*, such as a disposition to *envy*, *malice*, or *selfishness* (which are the most inveterate, the most difficult to be eradicated, of all vices); when neither health nor sickness, prosperity nor adversity;

verfity ; when neither a man's own reflections, the remonftrances of his friends, nor admonitions from the pulpit, have any vifible effect upon him ; when, after this, we fee no great change in his worldly affairs, or connexions, but he goes on from day to day, from month to month, and from year to year, without any fenfible alteration, there is reafon to fear that he is fallen into this *fatal security*, that he is, as it were, *fallen afleep*, and that this fleep will be *the fleep of death*.

However, a fadow of hope is not to be defpifed. One chance in a thoufand is ftill a chance ; and there are perfons whose vigour of mind is fuch, that, when fufficiently roused, they are equal to almoft any thing. Let thofe, therefore, who fee their danger at any time of life, be *up and doing, working out their falvation with fear and trembling, that, if poffible, they may flee from the wrath to come*.

THE END.

TRACTS.

IV.



TRACTS.

PRINTED AND PUBLISHED
BY THE UNITARIAN SOCIETY
FOR PROMOTING CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE
AND THE PRACTICE OF VIRTUE.

VOL. IV.

CONTAINING,
THE LIVES OF
THE REV. JOHN BIDDLE, M. A.
AND
MR. THOMAS FIRMIN, CITIZEN OF LONDON.

LONDON:
PRINTED, MDCCXCI.

744936

A
R E V I E W
OF THE
LIFE, CHARACTER AND WRITINGS
OF THE

REV. JOHN BIDDLE, M. A.

WHO WAS BANISHED TO THE ISLE OF SCILLY,
IN THE PROTECTORATE OF OLIVER CROMWELL.

BY JOSHUA TOULMIN, A. M.

OTHERS HAD TRIAL OF CRUEL MOCKINGS AND SCOUR-
INGS: YEA, MOREOVER OF BONDS AND IMPRISONMENT;
OF WHOM THE WORLD WAS NOT WORTHY.

LONDON:

PRINTED MDCCXCL.

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Journal of Management Studies, 19(1), 67-80.

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1. The first group of respondents (10%) was made up of 100% females, 100% of whom were married. The mean age was 39.4 years, with a range of 25 to 55 years. The majority of respondents (80%) were employed, with 20% being unemployed. The majority of respondents (80%) were employed, with 20% being unemployed. The majority of respondents (80%) were employed, with 20% being unemployed.

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— *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 1997

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P R E F A C E.

THE character brought forward in the following memoirs was, more than an hundred years ago, a character of celebrity at home and abroad, The questions concerning the doctrine of the trinity, that have been lately agitated, properly render it an object of curiosity to the present age; for Mr. Biddle was the father of the *english unitarians*.

But his history is a more important object of attention, on account of the severe persecutions he sustained, and the amiable, venerable piety he exemplified. Memoirs of such as have displayed singular virtues, and supported singular sufferings, for what they deemed divine truth, will always be useful; to shew the power of religious principle, and to convince men, that true piety is not peculiar to those who embrace a particular

ticular creed, but the genuine fruit of those principles, which are common to all christians.

From these views is the author induced to lay before the public the life of Mr. BIDDLE, which he presumes cannot fail to prove, to the candid and serious mind, instructive and edifying. To the attention of such, and to the blessing of God, he would humbly commend it.

Taunton, March 22, 1789.

A
R E V I E W,
OF THE
LIFE, CHARACTER AND WRITINGS
OF THE
REV. JOHN BIDDLE, A. M.

SECTION I.

The Birth, Education, and First Settlement, of
MR. JOHN BIDDLE.

EXCELLENCE and merit of character are independent of the circumstances of rank and place: yet the mind is gratified by the information that can be procured, concerning the family and birth of such as have distinguished themselves by their virtues, or gained, in any walk of life, peculiar reputation.

The good man, whose character and writings will be reviewed in the following pages, derived no

lustre from the honours of his descent, nor can his family be traced back beyond the name and rank of his immediate progenitor. He was the son of Mr. Edward Biddle, a woollen-draper, at Wotton-under-edge, in the county of Gloucester; a person whose circumstances were not affluent, but who supported his family with a virtuous reputation, and a credit rather above his rank. His son, Mr. John Biddle, the subject of these memoirs, was born in that town, in the year 1615.

He received his classical education at the free-school in the same place. He was not ten years of age, when his promising abilities, and the opening blossoms of genius and probity, drew on him the notice of his neighbours, and spread his fame through the country. George lord Berkley, who was a munificent patron of genius and learning, conferred on him, amongst other scholars, an exhibition of ten pounds per annum; but with this mark of distinction, that he bestowed it on young Biddle, at a more early period than he was accustomed to grant this donation.

Our youth, animated by this encouragement, pursued his studies with new vigour. His emulation was kindled; so that, with ease, he not only surpassed his school-fellows of the same rank;

“ but

“ but in time, out-ran his instructions, and became tutor to himself.”

In this period of his life he gave several particular specimens of the pregnancy of his parts, and his proficiency in learning. On the death of a school-fellow of high rank, he composed an elaborate oration in latin, which he recited before a full auditory. He also translated into english verse, the eclogues of Virgil, and the two first satires of Juvenal. We are led to entertain an high opinion of the execution of these juvenile performances, from this circumstance, that they were afterwards printed at London in 1634, with the approbation of some learned men, and dedicated to John Smith, Esq. of Nibley, in the county of Gloucester.

But notwithstanding the rapid and singular progress which he made in classical learning, he was, through different causes, detained at school till he was about seventeen years of age. In 1632 he was sent to the university of Oxford, and was admitted a student in Magdalen Hall. Here he prosecuted his studies with great assiduity and increasing fame; and was esteemed as doing honour to that seminary. It seems, that he now discovered not only a brilliancy of parts, but a peculiar liberality and independence of mind; for we are told, “ he did so philosophize, that it might be observed,
“ served,

“ served, he was determined more by reason, than
 “ authority : however, in divine things he did not
 “ dissent much from the common doctrine.” Of
 this, it seems, that a little piece he wrote against
 dancing furnished proof.

On the 23d of June, 1638, he took the degree of bachelor of arts ; and with reputation, both for learning and prudence, filled the post of a tutor in the university. On the 20th of May, 1641, the degree of master of arts was conferred upon him with great applause. Before this he had received an invitation to be master of the school in his native town, which he declined. But the reputation which procured this offer, directed the views of the magistrates of Gloucester to him : as his having refused it, left him free to attend to other overtures. In 1641, in consequence of ample recommendations, from the principal persons in the university, he was elected master of the free-school of Crisps, in the city of Gloucester. This choice was accompanied with earnest importunities. He accepted the invitation, and on his going to settle in this post, he was met at his approach to the city, by the magistrates, and was received with honourable expressions of joy and respect.

In this department he answered the expectations which had been formed of him. His skill and faith-

faithfulness were eminent. They, who could commit their sons to his tuition, congratulated themselves on their felicity. Hence, though the fixed salary was not great, the gratuities of parents made the emoluments of it considerable.

SECTION II.

The Freedom of his Religious Inquiries.

THE circumstances of Mr. Biddle's situation were truly inviting, and opened to him a pleasing prospect of usefulness and felicity. But his happiness in it was of short continuance. The love of money had not corrupted his mind : nor could the views of interest divert his attention from objects of a different nature. That freedom of inquiry which he had discovered in his philosophical and academical studies, was now directed to the subjects of religion. " Having laid aside " the impediments of prejudice, he gave himself " liberty," we are told, " to try all things, that " he might hold fast that which is good."

To adopt the observations of a great writer, as pertinent here, as they are just in themselves.

" Since

Since the understandings of men are similar to one another, (at least so much, as that no person can seriously maintain that *two and two make five*,) did they actually read only the same things, and had they no previous knowledge to mislead them, they could not but draw the same general conclusions from the same expressions. But one man having formed an hypothesis from reading the scriptures, another, who follows him, studies that hypothesis, and refines upon it, and another again refines upon him; till in time the scriptures themselves are little read by any of them; and are never looked into but with minds prepossessed with the notions of others concerning them. At the same time several other *original readers* and thinkers, having formed as many other hypotheses, each of them a little different from all the rest, and all of them being improved upon by a succession of partisans, each of whom contributes to widen the difference; at last no religions whatever, the most distinct originally, are more different from one another, than the various forms of *one* and the same religion.

“ To remedy this inconvenience, we must go back to first principles. We must begin again, each of us carefully studying the scriptures for ourselves, without the help of commentators, comparing one part with another. And when our minds shall, by this means, have been exposed to
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the same influences, we shall think and feel in the same manner.

“ Were it possible for a number of persons to make but an essay towards complying with this advice, by confining themselves for the compass of a single year, to the daily reading of the scriptures, without any other religious books whatever, I am persuaded, that, notwithstanding their previous differences, they would think much better of one another than they had done before. They would all have more nearly the same general ideas of the contents, and of the chief articles of christian faith and duty. By reading the whole themselves, they could hardly avoid receiving the deepest impressions of the certainty, and importance of the great and *leading principles*; those which they would find most frequently and earnestly inculcated: and their particular opinions having come less frequently in view, would be less obstinately retained. It was in this manner, I can truly say, that I formed the most distinguishing of my opinions in religion*.”

In this manner it appears that Mr. Biddle formed those sentiments, by which he was afterwards distinguished. He gave the holy scriptures a diligent reading; and made use of no other rule to determine controversies about religion, than the

* Priestley's *Considerations on differences of opinion in religion*, p. 25, 26.

scriptures; and of no other *authentic interpreter*, if a scruple arose concerning the sense of the *scriptures*, than *reason**.

This method of settling the mind on points of religious inquiry, he strongly recommended to others. " If thou, christian reader, dost from thy heart aspire to the knowledge of God, and his son Jesus Christ, wherein, as Christ himself testifieth, eternal life doth consist, John xvii. 3. fetch not the beginning thereof either from Socinus (a man otherwise of great understanding in the mystery of the gospel), nor from his adversaries; but being mindful of those words, Luke x. 22. *None knoweth who the son is but the Father; and who the Father is, but the son, and he to whom the son will reveal him*; lay aside, for a while, controversial writings, together with those prejudicate opinions that have been instilled into thine unwary understanding, and closely applying thyself to the search of the new covenant, most ardently implore the grace of Christ, that he would be pleased to manifest himself and the Father to thee; and make no doubt but the true light will at length illuminate the eyes of thy mind, that thou mayest walk in the way that leadeth unto life†.

* Life, p. 4. and Testimonies, p. 82. 12mo.

† See preface to a Discourse concerning the peace and concord of the church, p. 2, 3, 4.

So faithfully did Mr. Biddle himself pursue this plan of investigating divine truth, that he derived all his learning in matters of religion from the assiduous study of the scriptures, especially the new Testament ; with which he was so conversant, that he retained it all in his memory *verbatim*, not only in english but in greek, as far as the fourth chapter of the Revelations. The natural consequence and advantage of this perfect and exact knowledge of the new Testament, it is obvious, must have been a comprehensive view of its contents, a familiar acquaintance with its language and phraseology, so as readily to compare it together as it occurred to his recollection from different places, and a command of the full connexion in which any passage stands.

It also appears, that when he first began to pursue religious inquiries, and to form his sentiments for himself, he did not, as many have, immediately read the first writers of the christian church. For, in a piece he afterwards published, having quoted some passages from Eusebius, he adds, " How plainly now doth Eusebius, by the passages cited out of him, give attestation to what I hold touching the nature of the holy spirit, so that one would think I learned it from him ; whereas I knew not either of his book, or of what was de-

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livered therein, a great while after I had delivered my opinion*.

The tract where he thus expresses himself, shews indeed, that he afterwards carefully examined the fathers, to ascertain their sentiments concerning the one God : but it likewise proves, that he had a low opinion of their judgment, or of the weight of their testimony, which he used merely as an *argumentum ad hominem*.

It may be alledged, as a clear proof of the independence of Mr. Biddle's mind, and of his freedom from the influence of human authority, that he had read no socinian writer when he settled his judgment concerning the doctrine of the trinity ; though he afterwards looked into the polish writers of that class.

It is remarkable, that also the candid and excellent Dr. Lardner, who, amongst the writers of this century, takes a lead on the unitarian side, declares the same of himself. " I must acknowledge that I have not been greatly conversant with the writers of that denomination, (i. e. the socinians.) I have never read Crellius *de uno Deo Patre* : though I believe it to be a very good book.

* The Testimonies, p. 7. or the same in Unitarian tracts, v. 1. p. 27.

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There is also in our own language a collection of Unitarian tracts, in two or three quartos. But I am not acquainted with it. Nor can I remember that I ever looked into it. I have formed my sentiments upon the scriptures, and by reading such commentators, chiefly, as are in the best repute. I may add, that the reading of the ancient writers of the church has been of use to confirm me, and to assist me in clearing difficulties*."

Whether these eminent and able persons, Biddle and Lardner, attained to the knowledge of the truth, every one must judge for himself. But this is certain, a method more proper in itself, or more promising of success, could not be adopted, than a diligent application to the only authoritative

* A Letter on the *Logos*, written in the year 1730, p. 55. Since the above was drawn up, the author has received a letter from a learned and judicious correspondent, a minister of an unitarian society amongst the baptists in Holland, who says the same of himself. "I was in the same case with Dr. Lardner, and could use his words. (See Lindsey's Two dissertations, p. 48.) To this time, I never had read Socinus, or socinian writers, before the works of Lindsey, by which my own sentiments are enlarged. I read, before the year 1775, no commentators, no ancient writers of the church. A year's studying the old and new Testament led me into the way of truth. My honoured master was an Arian, rather Clarkian. More than one of my friends, after my example, found the truth by reading alone the scriptures."

Source of true information on the subject of their inquiry.

To return to Mr. Biddle. The temper, with which he prosecuted his inquiries, was suitable to the nature and importance of his researches.

As the lucrative prospects of his situation did not seduce him into an indifference to the knowledge of divine truth; so, we are told, that he was influenced in his pursuit of it, not by a vain curiosity, but by "the love of Christ, who is truth and life." His diligent reading of the scriptures was accompanied with fervent prayers for the divine illumination. The manner and strain of his address, prefixed to his Twelve Arguments, is a specimen and proof of that serious spirit which he possessed; and of the pious convictions under which his researches were conducted.

"Christian reader, I beseech thee," he writes, "as thou tenderest thy salvation, that thou wouldst thoroughly examine the following disputation in the fear of God, considering how much his glory is concerned therein*."

These arguments were not offered to the public with a decisive tone, and as the result of a fixed determination on the point, which is discussed in

* Twelve Arguments, the preface; or Unitarian tracts, v. 1. p. 16.

them;

them ; but with the avowed design of calling forth some able and learned persons to investigate the question, and resolve his doubts.

“ The author,” he says, “ hath a long time waited upon learned men, for a satisfactory answer to these arguments ; but hath received none. His hopes are, that the publishing of them will be a means to produce it ; that he may receive satisfaction, and others may be held no longer in suspense, who are in travail with an earnest expectation as well as he*.”

Upon Mr. Biddle’s examination of the holy scriptures, it appeared to him, that the common doctrine concerning the trinity was not well founded in revelation, much less in reason. Being as communicative of his sentiments, when occasion offered, as he was free in his inquiries, he spake of his doubts without reserve, and opened his reasons for calling the truth of that doctrine into question. This discovery of his thoughts soon alarmed the fears, and inflamed the spirits, of some zealots. The charge of heresy was raised against him, and he was summoned before the magistrates ; to whom he exhibited, on the point about which he was accused, the following confession of faith, viz.

* Twelve Arguments, the preface, p. 4 &c

1. I believe that there is but one infinite and almighty essence, called God.

2. I believe, that, as there is but one infinite and almighty essence, so there is but one person in that essence.

3. I believe that our saviour Jesus Christ is truly God, by being truly, really and properly united to the only person of the infinite and almighty essence.

This confession was made May 2, 1644. It failed of giving satisfaction to the magistrates, who urged him to be more explicit concerning the plurality of persons in the divine essence. Accordingly, about four days after, knowing that the word *person*, when ascribed to the divine Being, was used in various senses, both by the ancient fathers and modern writers, he confessed, that there were three in that one divine essence, commonly termed persons.

"By this it appears," observes the author of his life, "that how distinct soever might be his conceptions concerning the trinity, yet he was not determinate enough in his expressing of that matter, as he became not long after." Mr. Biddle's second confession was indeed clearly contradictory to the first which he exhibited. But candour will make every allowance for a man, probably intimidated by the prospect of a prison; whose mind

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was not fully made up on a question involved in the intricacies of scholastic controversy, and whose holy fortitude was as yet in the first feeble stage of its exercise.

SECTION III.

His Tract entitled *Twelve Arguments.*

In whatever darkness or ambiguity the language of Mr. Biddle was involved, when he was summoned a second time, to make a confession of his faith; it reflects honour on his sincerity and fortitude, that, afterwards, he expressed himself with greater clearness and precision. Instead of desisting from inquiries which had already threatened, nay, endangered, his security and peace, he resumed them with new vigour, and with a serious spirit of piety and earnest prayer to almighty God for his assistance, he pursued his examination of the scriptures, on the point in dispute, with greater attention and care.

“ A love of sacred truth is hardly consistent with an absolute indifference about its reception in the world.” The mind of Mr. Biddle, it appears,

pears, was as active to impart, as it was solicitous to gain the knowledge of divine things. His resolution to aver and communicate his conceptions kept pace with the convictions which he obtained on the points he investigated. For as he proceeded in his researches, he conferred with his friends on the subject and result of his inquiries, and freely opened his mind on the questions concerning one God and three persons.

Amongst other communications that he made to his acquaintance, was a paper, entitled, "*Twelve Arguments*, drawn out of the scripture, wherein the commonly received opinion touching the deity of the holy spirit is clearly and fully refuted." These arguments were drawn up in the form of so many syllogisms, and each was illustrated and supported by distinct explanations and reasonings.

To many, who with the author do not embrace the common doctrine of the trinity, his arguments, under those logical propositions, will appear to rest more on the sound of words, than to be derived from a liberal interpretation of scripture, and an enlarged acquaintance with its idioms and language.

They all proceed on this principle, and are meant to establish it, viz. that the holy spirit is a person or intelligent being. The same opinion of the distinct personality of the holy spirit has
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been advanced and defended by considerable writers *, who have denied his deity. But the most full and candid view of the language of scripture, on this head, has been given us by the excellent Dr. Lardner †.

The point elucidated and argued in this tract is, “ that by the words, the *spirit*, the *spirit of God*, and the *spirit of the lord*, which occur in “ the old Testament, is meant, not a being or an “ intelligent agent ; but a power, a gift, a favour, “ a blessing: and that by the phrases, the *spirit*, the “ *holy spirit*, the *holy ghost*, the *spirit of God*, the “ *spirit of truth*, the *comforter*, in the new Testa- “ ment, is also meant a gift, or the plentiful ef- “ fusion of miraculous and spiritual gifts.” Were it not to incur the censure of dogmatizing, and using too decisive a tone, one would be tempted to pronounce this piece of Dr. Lardner’s satisfactory and unanswerable.

* See Dr. Scott’s Demonstration of the scripture doctrine of the trinity, and an Appeal to the common sense of all christian people.

† A letter concerning the Logos, written in the year 1790, the first postscript. The point has been very lately discussed, and closely argued in an ingenious little tract, entitled, “ The Im- “ personality of the holy spirit. Printed for John Masson; “ 1787.”

on comparing this text with Acts xxviii. 25, 26, 27. that which in Isaiah is attributed to the Lord, is in the Acts ascribed to the holy spirit. which kind of arguing, though it be very frequent with them, is yet very frivolous : for at this rate, he adds, I may also conclude, that because what is attributed to the Lord, Exod. xxxii. 11. is in the 7th verse of the same chapter ascribed to Moses : therefore Moses is the Lord. And because what is attributed to the Lord in Isaiah lxv. 1. is in the xth of Romans, verse 20. ascribed to Isaiah, therefore Isaiah is the Lord. And because what is attributed to God, 2 Tim. i. 8, 9. is by Paul attributed to himself, 1 Cor. ix. 22. and to Timothy, 1 Tim. iv. 16. therefore Paul, yea, Timothy, is God *.

These remarks are capable of an extensive application in the dispute concerning the essence of Christ, and his equality with the Father. The last observation in particular, affects almost the whole series of arguments in vindication of that opinion.

The tract, of which we are now speaking, though originally drawn up for the perusal of his friends, and for private use, was followed with the

* As before, page 26, 27. or Unitarian tracts, v. i. p. 12.

most serious consequences to the author, and with a great revolution in his condition.

SECTION IV.

Proceedings against Mr. Biddle.

THERE is no act of iniquity to which false zeal hath not prompted men. It hath not only drawn the sword and kindled the fire, to restrain and punish what has been deemed heretical pravity, but, when open and obvious proofs of it have not lain against a person, by interrogatories and tortures, it hath extorted confessions on which to ground a conviction. It hath construed suspicions into proofs. It hath invited or disposed men to violate the confidence of friendship, and given a sanction to perfidy. Of this the history of Mr. Biddle furnishes a melancholy proof.

The *twelve arguments* noticed in the last section, were communicated among others, to one, who, while Mr. Biddle most probably thought him a sincere inquirer after truth, shewed himself unworthy of any confidence. For, instead of weighing the force of the reasoning, or endeavouring

ing, in the intercourses of private friendship, to convince Mr. Biddle of its fallacy, he was ungenerous enough to betray him to the magistrates of Gloucester, and to the committee of the parliament, that then resided there.

The consequence of this information being lodged against him was, that he was committed to the common goal, December 2, 1645. This commitment was cruel and peculiarly afflictive to him: for he was, at the time, ill of a dangerous fever. The design of his imprisonment was to secure his person, till the parliament should take cognizance of the affair. The severity of this proceeding, happily, was soon mitigated by the interposition of a compassionate friend, a person of eminence in Gloucester, who procured his enlargement, by giving bail for his appearance, when the parliament should see fit to call him to their bar.

About June, 1646, archbishop Usher, passing through Gloucester, in his way to London, had a conference with Mr. Biddle, respecting his sentiments concerning the trinity, and endeavoured to convince him that he was in an error, but without effect.

Six months after he was set at liberty, Mr. Biddle was summoned to appear at Westminster, and the parliament immediately chose a commit-

tee, to whom the cognizance of his cause was referred. Upon his examination he freely and candidly confessed, " That he did deny the commonly received opinion concerning the deity of the holy ghost, as he was accused; but that he was ready to hear what could be opposed to him, and if he could not make out his opinion to be true, honestly to acknowledge his error."

He was urged to declare his sentiments, concerning the deity of Christ, but he prudently waved the question, as not being to the point on which he was accused, and as it was a subject which he had not sufficiently studied, publicly to engage himself on it.

Though he endeavoured to have his affair brought to a conclusion on the single question, which alone was properly before his judges, no decision was passed, but he was wearied out by tedious and expensive delays. This induced him, at the distance of sixteen months from his first commitment, to address one of the committee, sir Henry Vane, in a letter dated April 1, 1647, in which he solicits and beseeches that gentleman, if he had any bowels towards the distressed, either to procure his discharge, or at least to make a report to the house, touching his denial of the supposed deity of the holy spirit.

In this letter he plainly and fully expressed his
ideas.

ideas concerning the nature and offices of the holy spirit. “ As for my opinion touching the holy spirit, it is that I believe the holy spirit to be the chief of all ministering spirits, peculiarly sent out from heaven, to minister on their behalf that shall inherit salvation; and I do place him, both according to the scriptures and the primitive christians, and by name Justin Martyr, in his apology, in the third rank after God and Christ, giving him a pre-eminence over all the rest of the heavenly host. So that as there is one principal spirit amongst the evil angels, known in scripture by the name of *satan*, or the *adversary**, or the *unclean*† spirit, or the *evil spirit of God*‡, or the *spirit of God*‡, or the *spirit*‡ by way of eminence; even so there is one *principal spirit* (I borrow this appellation from the septuagint, who render the last clause of the 12th verse of psalm li. in this manner, *πνευματι πνευματων στερησον με, spiritu principali fulci me*; stablish me with thy principal spirit): there is I say one principal spirit, amongst the good angels, called by the name of the *advocate* or the *holy spirit*, or the *spirit* §, by way of eminence:

* 1 Pet. 5. 8.

† Zech. 13. 2.

‡ In support of the application of these terms to *satan*, Mr. B. refers to 1 Sam. xvi. 15, 16, and last verse; and 1 Kings. xxii. 21. See the original.

§ John xvi. 7. Ephes. iv. 30. Neh. ix. 20. 1 Cor. vii. 40. Acts x. 19.

This opinion of mine is attested by the whole tenor of the scripture, which perpetually speaketh of him as differing from God, and inferior to him *."

Then, after an enumeration of many texts, which in his apprehension, decidedly supported his sentiments, he adds some pertinent reflections on the importance of the question, and the nature of the proceedings against him.

" Behold now," says he, " the cause for which I have lien under persecution, raised against me by my adversaries, who being unable to justify by argument their practice of giving glory to the holy spirit, as God, in the end of their prayers, since there is neither precept nor example for it in all the scripture, and being taxed by me for giving the glory of God to another, and worshipping what he hath not commanded, nor ever came into his heart, have in a cruel and unchristian manner resorted to the arm of flesh, and instigated the magistrate against me, hoping by his sword (not that of the spirit) to uphold their will-worship; but in vain, since every plant that the heavenly Father hath not set shall be rooted up. And that the practice of worshipping the

* Twelve arguments. Letter to a member of parliament, p. 10 or Unitarian tract, vol. 1. p. 12.

holy spirit of God, as God, is such a plant as God never set in his word, would soon appear to the honourable house, could they be so far prevailed with, as, having laid aside all prejudice, seriously to weigh the many and solid proofs that I produce for my opinion out of the scripture, together with the slight, or rather no proofs of the adverse party for their opinion; which they themselves know not what to make of, but that they endeavour to delude both themselves and others with personalities, modes, substances, and such like brain-sick notions, that have neither sap nor sense in them, and were first hatched by the subtilty of Satan in the heads of platonists, to pervert the worship of the true God.

“ Neither could this controversy be set on foot in a fitter juncture of time than this, wherein the parliament and the kingdom have solemnly engaged themselves to reform religion both in discipline and doctrine. For, amongst all the corruptions in doctrine, which certainly are many, there is none that more deserveth to be amended than this, that so palpably thwarteth the whole tenour of the scripture, and trencheth to the very object of our worship, and therefore ought not to be lightly passed over by a man that professeth himself a christian, much more a reformer. God is jealous of his honour, and will not give it to another:
we

we therefore, as beloved children, should imitate our heavenly Father therein, and not upon any pretence whatsoever depart from his exprefs command, and give the worship of the Supreme Lord of heaven and earth to him whom the scripture no where affirmeth to be God.

“ For my own particular, after a long impartial inquiry of the truth, in this controversy, and after much and earnest calling upon God, to give unto me the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him; I find myself obliged, both by the principles of reason and scripture, to embrace the opinion I now hold forth, and as much as in me lyeth, to endeavour that the honour of almighty God be not transferred to another, not only to the offence of God himself, but also of his holy spirit, who cannot but be grieved to have that ignorantly ascribed to himself, which is proper to God that sends him, and which he no where challengeth to himself in scripture.

“ What shall befall me in the pursuance of this work, I refer to the disposal of almighty God, whose glory is dearer to me, not only than my liberty, but than my life. It will be your part, honoured sir, into whose hands God hath put such an opportunity, to examine the business impartially, and to be an helper to the truth, considering that this controversy is of the greatest importance

portance in the world, and that the divine truth suffers herself not to be despised scot-free.

“ Neither let the meanness of my outward presence deter you from stirring, since it is the part of a wise man, as in all things, so especially in matters of religion, not to regard so much who it is that speaketh, as what it is that is spoken; remembering how our saviour in the gospel saith, that God is wont to hide his secrets from the wise and prudent, and to reveal them unto children. In which number I willingly reckon myself, being conscious of my own personal weakness, but well assured of the evidence and strength of the scripture to bear me out in this cause*.”

The effect of this pious and humble remonstrance was, that sir Henry Vane, to whom it was addressed, shewed himself a friend to Mr. Biddle, and reported his case to the house. The result was not favourable to Mr. Biddle's comfort and liberty, for he was committed to the custody of one of the officers of the house of commons, and he was continued under this restraint for the five following years. In the mean time the matter was referred to the consideration of the assembly of divines; then sitting at Westminster, before

* Twelve arguments. The Letter written to a certain knight, p. 6, 7, 8. or Unitarian tracts, v. 1. p. 24, 25, 26.

some of whom he often appeared, and gave them, in writing, his twelve arguments against the deity of the holy spirit.

The answer to his arguments, which he received at any of these interviews, was not satisfactory or convincing to his mind. This induced him to print them in the year 1647, in hopes that the publication of them would not only give the world a fair state of his case, but excite attention to the question. It was accompanied with an address to the impartial reader, signed J. H. in which the writer expressed his own and the author's earnest hope, that the publication of these arguments would engage some one to attempt a solid reply to them; such a reply, as would not merely tax his arguments with being weak and invalid, but, by clear and strong reasonings, would refute them, and carry conviction to inquisitive and doubting minds: A reply, that did not substitute railing for argument, and supply the deficiency of its proofs by the bitterness of its invectives. "At these rates," he observed, "the weakest man might easily subvert the strongest controversy."

This preface also bespoke and intreated the reader's very serious attention to the arguments laid before him; "as to a matter which affected the divine glory, and his own salvation:" the author

thor requested him " at any hand to forbear condemning his opinion as erroneous, till he was able to bring pertinent and solid answers to all his arguments."

To suppress the piece, and to prohibit the progress of inquiry, it was justly observed, could " no ways unscruple doubting spirits:" amongst whom for the present the writer numbered himself, expecting an answer to these ensuing arguments, adding, in the language of a pious and ingenuous mind; and that " God will be with him that undertaketh it, and write in a spirit of meekness, and of wisdom, in the revelation and knowledge of truth, shall be the matter of his prayers, who desires the truth may be cleared up, and shine like the noon-day, and all error confounded, and vanish before truth, like a mist before the sun." J. H.*

The publication of this tract raised a great alarm, and it was called in and burnt by the common hangman. But this illiberal mode of suppressing the work, and stifling inquiry, had only a short and temporary effect. This piece, with two other tracts, was reprinted by the author in 1653, and it was published a third time, amongst the Unitarian tracts, in 4to, in the year 1691. To which the life of the author was prefixed.

* Twelve arguments, in 12mo. 1647.

SECTION V.

Mr. Biddle publishes his *Confession of Faith*, and
Testimonies of the Fathers.

MR. BIDDLE appears to have possessed a firmness of mind, which not only supported him under the dark clouds that gathered round him, but enabled him to pursue his inquiries, and to publish, with steadiness and freedom, his sentiments concerning the points for which he suffered. For, being yet in prison, he printed, in 1648, a *Confession of faith concerning the holy trinity*, according to the scripture, with the *Testimonies of several of the fathers on this head*.

In the conclusion of the preface to the *Confession of faith*, he frankly expresses himself on the design of this publication, and the importance of its object. "I have," says he, "here presented you with a *Confession of faith* touching the holy trinity, exactly drawn out of the scriptures, with the texts alledged at large, that so you may the better judge how suitable the same is to the word of God.

"Neither have I other aim in the publication thereof than to restore that pure and genuine knowledge of God delivered in the scripture, and
which

which hath for many hundred years been hidden from the eyes of men, by the corrupt glosses and traditions of Antichrist, who hath instead thereof obtruded upon them I know not what absurd and uncouth notions, bearing them in hand that ignorance is the mother of devotion, and that they then think and speak best of God, when their conceits and words are most irrational and senseless. By which means, having renounced those quiddities and strange terms, that have vitiated the simplicity of the scripture, and having laid asleep the contentations arising from them, we shall at length unanimously with one mouth glorify the God and Father of our lord Jesus Christ*."

The preface, which closes with the preceding paragraphs, is occupied with a full representation of the evils, of which Mr. Biddle conceived the doctrine of the trinity had been productive, having, as he expresseth it, "not only made way for the idolatrous pollutions of the Roman Antichrist, but, lying at the bottom, corrupteth almost our whole religion."

To illustrate and confirm this assertion, he observes, that the common opinion touching three

* See the Confession of faith, 12mo. 1648, or Unitarian tracts, 4to. v. 1. tract ii. 1691.

persons in God, subverteth the unity of God, so frequently inculcated in the scripture; and that it hindereth men from praying according to the pre-script of the gospel, which instructs us to ask of God the holy spirit, and to pray to him through his son Jesus Christ, which implieth that God is the Father only.

He also considers the tenet of three persons in God as incompatible with the love and honour which we owe to the most high God; this is the *highest* love and honour that it is in our power to exercise, and of which *one person only* can be the object, who can be the *Father only*; for the son and spirit, as the names import, deriving from him, can be only secondary objects of honour and love; in subordination to the Father, and with reference to the powers and characters received from him.

He represents it as another consequence of the common opinion, that it thwarteth the idea, which men naturally entertain of God, as the Being who is the first cause of all things, existing of himself only, and all others from him. It looks, therefore, like an attempt to deprive men of their understanding, and in a point of the greatest importance, to ascribe supreme deity to two other persons besides the Father, i. e. to ascribe the character of the first cause, of self-existence,

existence, to beings who are caused; or, according to the orthodox style, to the son, who is begotten of the Father, and to the holy spirit, which proceedeth from both.

Another consequence of this doctrine, he also remarks, is, that it is a stumbling-block to the ancient people of God, the jews, and is a bar to their reception of christianity. " For they, having formerly smarted for their idolatry, are now grown exceeding cautious of a tenet looking that way." He concludes with remonstrating on the effect which the doctrine of the trinity has, in impeding the accomplishment of the prophecy long since delivered by Zechariah, ch. xiv. 9. " In that day the Lord shall be one, and his name ONE." Whereas, the partisans of this doctrine contend, that the Lord is three, calling him *Deum trinum*, and that his name is not *One*, but three; even the Father, the son, and the holy ghost.

Having thus freely arraigned the common doctrine of the trinity, the author, in the following treatise, states and endeavours to establish his own ideas on the subject. This he does under the form of six articles or propositions, each of which is separately illustrated by a full discussion of the principles it exhibits, and by a copious display of reasonings and divine authorities in proof of its truth.

A selection of the three first articles may be entertaining and instructive, as well as furnish a specimen of this performance.

I. " I believe that there is one most high God, creator of heaven and earth, and first cause of all things pertaining to our salvation, and consequently the ultimate object of our faith and worship; and that this God is none but the Father of our lord Jesus Christ, the first person of the holy trinity.

II. " I believe that there is one chief son of the most high God, or spiritual, heavenly, and perpetual lord and king, set over the church by God, and second cause of all things pertaining to our salvation, and consequently the intermediate object of our faith and worship; and that this son of the most high God is none but Jesus Christ, the second person of the holy trinity*.

III. " I believe that Jesus Christ, to the intent he might be our brother, and have a fellow-feeling of our infirmities, and so become the more ready to help us (the consideration whereof is the greatest encouragement to piety that can be imagined), hath no other than a human nature, and therefore in this very nature is not only a person (since none but an human person can be our brother), but also our lord, yea, our God."

* See p. 42. on the use of this word "trinity."

Were we to lay before the reader the illustrations and proofs brought forward, under every article, we must re-publish the tract at full length ; yet it may be acceptable to point out some remarks which are recommended to our attention by their novelty, or importance, or force.

Under the first article he considers the text, Gen. i. 26. *Let us make man*, as addressed to the holy spirit, whom he conceives to be represented in verse 2. Ps. civ. 30. and Job xxvi. 13. as the instrument of God in the creation ; upon which he starts this question : “ Had the son of God, Christ Jesus, been also employed in creating Adam, would he not likewise have been mentioned in the history of the creation ? Was it not as material, and altogether of as great consequence, for Moses and the jews to have known, that the son of God, Christ Jesus, was employed by God, in creating Adam, as the holy spirit.”

He grants that the holy scripture attributeth creation to Christ ; but then he remarks, that by the nature of the thing itself, by the circumstances of the places, and by express words, it appears that not the first but second creation, or the reduction of things into a new state or order, is meant.

He argues that Christ expressly precludes our conceiving of him as the creator of Adam, when

he ascribes it to another being, Matt. 19. 14. in that description, *HE that made them*. He considers this notion as totally incompatible with the language of Peter and Paul concerning Christ: the former speaking of him as *fore-ordained*, or *fore-known* before the foundation of the world; which can be said only of things that are to come, and are not already in being. The latter, Rom. v. 14. describing *Adam as the type of him that was to come*, or as the greek, *was to be*, *μελλοντες*. Could Adam be a type of a being already existing? or was the creator of Adam yet to be; as yet to exist? or can it be said of any one, that *he is to be*, when he is already in being.

Under the second article, he argues that Phil. 2. 5. cannot be understood to speak of what is called the incarnation; because the apostle exhorting the Philippians to humility, from the example of Christ, must be supposed to draw his argument from some instance that was conspicuous, and had been visible to sight and contemplation, which the incarnation could not be. He further urges, that, in this passage, the apostle speaks of our lord only as a man.

On 1 Cor. viii. 6. *By whom are all things*, he remarks, by *all things* are not here meant all things simply, but all things pertaining to our salvation, as is evident from this, that the apostle speaketh

speaketh of christians, and putteth an article before the word *all* in the greek, which implieth restriction *.

In discussing the third article concerning the strict humanity of Christ, having quoted 2 Tim. ii. 5. John iii. 13. vi. 62. viii. 40. iii. 14. 15. Matt. ix. 6, 7, 8. Matt. xvi. 27, 28. Dan. vii. 13, 14. he observeth, "that the most excellent things, which are in the scripture, attributed to Christ, are attributed to him not only under the notion, but also under the very name of a *man*."

In the title of the tract, which we are reviewing, stands the word *trinity*, and it frequently occurs in the following pages, as a term adopted by the author to convey a scriptural truth. This, considering the main drift and tendency of the treatise, may surprize the reader. It may, certainly, be concluded from hence, that he had no objection to the use of the word; whether it was done with a design more easily to insinuate his ideas of the scripture doctrine on this point, viz. that it consisteth of *one God, one lord, and one spirit*; or whether it proceedeth from the mere force of early habit, which often last of all permits us to give up words, though we may long before have discarded the ideas generally affixed to them.

* διὸ καὶ πάντα.

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But it is not duly considered that the use of words, to which custom has long affixed a peculiar sense, will continue to awaken in the mind those ideas which they have generally been employed to express; and that the force of the old meaning will prevail over any gloss or interpretation, with which we may accompany them. Would we get rid of error, we must lay aside the terms under which it has been clothed, as well as explode the ideas themselves. At least this should be done with respect to such terms as, like the word "trinity," have no sanction from the language of scripture, but are surely human inventions.

Mr. Biddle's confession of faith was soon succeeded by another tract, entitled, *THE TESTIMONIES of Iræneus, Justin Martyr, Novatianus, Theophilus* (who lived the two first centuries after Christ was born, or thereabouts) as also *Arnobius, Lactantius, Eusebius, Hilary, and Brightman*; concerning that one GOD and the persons of HOLY TRINITY. Together with observations on the same, printed at London.

It may appear inconsistent with the avowed principles of Mr. Biddle, who professed to derive his sentiments solely from the scriptures, that he should make an appeal to human testimonies. The reason and propriety of his adopting this mode

mode of arguing are stated by himself at the close of this piece.

“ Those human testimonies above-written have I alledged, not that I much regard them as to myself (who make use of no other *rule* to determine controversies about religion, than the *scripture*; and of no other authentic *interpreter*, if a scruple arise concerning the sense of scripture, than *reason*) but for the sake of the adversaries, who continually crake *the fathers, the fathers*. And though such of them as dissent from the church of Rome, lay aside this plea, when they have to do with papists about sundry points of controversy; yet do they take it up again, in a manner waving the scripture, when they argue with me.

“ For it is apparent that the fathers of the two first centuries, or thereabouts, when the judgments of christians were yet free, and not enslaved with the determinations of councils, asserted the Father only to be that one God, and so were in the main right as to the faith concerning the HOLY TRINITY, however they went awry in imagining two natures in Christ, which came to pass, (as we before hinted) partly because they were great admirers of Plato, and accordingly (as Justus Lipsius somewhere saith) did in *outward profession so put on Christ*, as that in heart they did *not put off Plato*, wittily applying his high notions

tions, touching the creation of the world, to what was simply and plainly spoken of the man Christ Jesus, in relation to the gospel by the apostle John ; partly that they might thereby avoid the scandal of worshipping a *crucified man*, a thing then very odious amongst the jews and pagans, and now amongst deluded christians *.”

Amongst other passages cited by Mr. Biddle from the ancient christian writers, is that from Justin Martyr, lately quoted by Dr. Priestley, whose inferences from it have been controverted by his opponents. It may therefore be acceptable to the reader, if we lay before him Mr. Biddle's translation of the passage, and remarks on it.

“ Nevertheless, O TRYPHON, said I, this remaineth safe, that such a one is the Christ of God, although I cannot demonstrate that he was, before, the son of the maker of all things, being a god, and was born a man by the virgin, it being every way demonstrated that he is the Christ of God, whosoever otherwise he shall be found to be. But if I shall not demonstrate that he did pre-exist, and according to the counsel of the Father endured to be born a man of like affections with us, being endued with flesh, it is just and fit to say that I am mis-

* The Testimonies, &c. printed in 12mo. p. 83, 84. or Unitarian tracts, 4to. v. 1. tract 2. p. 30.

taken in this only, and not to deny that he is the Christ, if he appear to be a man born of men, and to become the Christ by election.

“ For there are some dear friends, said I, of our kind, who confess him to be the Christ, yet hold him to be a man born of men. To whom I assent not; no, though very many of the same opinion with me should speak it, since we are commanded by Christ himself not to hearken to the doctrines of men, but to such things as have been promulgated by the prophets of happy memory, and taught by himself.

“ And TRYPHON replied, They that say he was a man, and according to election anointed and made Christ, methinks speak more probably, than you who say such things as you relate. For all we expect that the Christ shall be a man of men.”

On this passage Mr. Biddle offers some strictures. “ Observe here,” christian reader, “ that Justin Martyr did not think it inconsistent that Jesus should be the Christ, although he had no other than the human nature. Secondly, that divers christians, whom Justin himself owned for such, for he saith that they were of the same kind, and opinion with him, did then *de facto* affirm that Jesus, whom they counted the Christ, had none but a human nature. Both which were in the succeeding age by Athanasius, and since by other

other such furious zealots, stiffly denied, and he pronounced utterly incapable of eternal life, who should not believe, not only that Christ had another nature, but (what neither Justin Martyr, nor any other of the christians, who lived in the two first centuries, and whose works are extant, ever did affirm) that that other nature was the very nature of the most high God. Thirdly, that the jews (who would be happy, were their opinion, concerning the kingdom of Christ, as true as that they hold concerning his nature) did not believe that the Christ who was to come, should be other than a man*.”

SECTION VI.

A cruel ordinance obtained against Mr. Biddle.

IT is not supposable that these pieces of Mr. Biddle could be published without drawing a great odium on their author, or that this attack on prevailing and established opinions, could be made without raising indignation against him. At that

* Testimonies, p. 24, &c. ed. in 12mo. or, Unitarian tracts, v. i. tract iv. page 9, 10, 18.

time the supreme power was solely in the hands of the parliament, the episcopalian hierarchy had been overturned, and in the room of it had succeeded a presbyterian and ecclesiastical government, the high court of which sat at Westminster, and consisted of an assembly of divines. These took the alarm at the appearance of Mr. Biddle's writings; and, instead of applying themselves to the refutation of his sentiments by a candid and solid answer to his arguments, they applied to the civil power, and supplied the defect of their own exertions by recourse to its commanding terrors. They preferred the carnal to the spiritual weapon, and found a more expeditious and popular remedy against the rise of heresy, in the use of the sword, than in that of the pen.

They accordingly solicited the interference of the parliament, and prevailed with it to pass an ordinance for the punishing of blasphemies and heresies; from which Mr. Biddle's life was in great danger; for though it took a wide compass, and was formed to reach a variety of opinions, yet it was evidently pointed, in particular, against the notions which he had advanced.

This ordinance was directly pointed against such as, in any mode, should not only deny the being, omnipresence, fore-knowledge, almighty power, holiness and eternity of God; but who

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should

should, by preaching, printing, or writing, controvert the deity of the son, or of the holy spirit, or the equality of Christ with the Father, or the distinction of two natures, the godhead and humanity, or the sinless perfection of his humanity, and the meritoriouness of his death in behalf of believers; or that any of the books, commonly deemed canonical, were not the word of God. It pronounced those, who offended in any of these instances, guilty of felony, and doomed them, if convicted on confession, or on the oaths of two witnesses, before two justices, to imprisonment, without bail or mainprize, until the next gaol-delivery, when the witnesses were bound to give evidence, and the party were to be indicted for feloniously publishing and maintaining such error. It then enacted, that in case the indictment should be found, and the party on his trial should not abjure the same error, and maintenance and defence of the same, he should suffer *the pains* OF DEATH, as in case of felony, without benefit of clergy.

It appointed the same process, and decreed the same sentence against those who had been formerly indicted on the same grounds, and after having abjured their error, should again publish and maintain the same.

If the sanction by which this ordinance enforced

forced other determinations, were a milder aspect, what was wanting in the severity of its sentence, was counterbalanced by the rigour with which it extended and multiplied its decisions. To maintain and publish that all men should be saved; that man hath by nature free will to turn to God; that the soul dieth or sleepeth after the body is dead; that revelations or workings of the spirit are a rule of faith; that man is bound to believe no more than by his reason he can comprehend; that the two sacraments of baptism and the lord's supper, are not ordinances commanded by the word of God; that baptising infants is unlawful, or such baptism is void, and that such persons ought to be baptised again, and in pursuance thereof shall baptise any person formerly baptised; that the observation of the lord's day, as it is enjoined by the laws and ordinances of this realm, is not according to, or is contrary to, the word of God; or that it is not lawful to join in public prayer or family prayer, or to teach children to pray; or that the churches of England are no more churches, nor their ministers and ordinances true ministers and ordinances; or that the church government by presbytery is unlawful, or antichristian; or that magistracy, or the power of the civil magistrate by law established in England, is unlawful, or that all use of arms, though for the public defence, (and

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though

though the cause be never so just) is unlawful. To advance or maintain any of these opinions incurred, by this ordinance, imprisonment till the party should find two sufficient sureties, before two justices of the peace, one of them to be of the quorum, that he would not publish or maintain the same error or errors any more*.

The enumeration of the opinions condemned by this ordinance (some of which are omitted in this review) is so minute, and full and pointed, as plainly to speak this language: "Our principles form an unerring standard, and not any deviation from it, in one instance, is or shall be admitted." No decree of any councils, no bull of any pope could be more dogmatical, or authoritative; few, if any, have been more sanguinary.

Besides the severity of the penalties, which it denounced, the mode of process which it appointed was arbitrary and repugnant to the constitution of this country in particular, as well as opposite to

* See Crosby's History of the english baptists, vol. 1. p. 199. 205. or British biography, vol. 6. p. 82. 84. This ordinance is also preserved in "A Collection of acts and ordinances of general use, made in the parliament begun and held at Westminster, the 3d of November, 1648, and since unto the adjournment of the parliament begun and holden the 17th of September, 1656, being a continuation of that work from the end of Poulton's collection." By Henry Scobell, esq. clerk of the parliament. Folio 1658.

the general principles of equity and justice : for it allowed neither the privilege of a jury, nor the liberty of an appeal. Such is the operation of religious bigotry.

The truth, indeed is, that bigotry, though never amiable nor reasonable, is comparatively an harmless thing, when it exists only in individuals who are not armed with the power of the sword; nor can act with an united and combined influence and authority. The alliance of the church with the state, gives the sting to this intolerant and baneful temper ; and it matters little, whether the leaders in the church support the rank of bishops, or move only in the humble post of presbyters.

Both episcopacy and presbyterianism “ adopt one grand error, productive of two great evils; which generate ten thousand more, all nefarious. The great and fountain error is the considering of *conscience*, as a subject of human government. This notion produces two great evils. 1. LEGISLATION; now all human legislation is oppressive to conscience, and it is immaterial where this power is lodged. It is TYRANNY any where. 2. Enforcing laws made by Jesus, by penal sanctions. In popery and episcopacy both the legislative and executive power are lodged in the same person. Presbyterianism is exactly like them, and only swears the civil magistrate to do the worst part

of the work. From these two evils, making laws for conscience and then executing them, or executing laws made by Jesus Christ, by coercive measures, proceed confusion and every evil work*."

The conduct of the presbyterians, during the short period, when they were in alliance with the supreme powers of this country, verifies the truth of these remarks. In reference to *their* measures, Milton had every reason to say with satirical poignancy, "New presbyter is but old priest wrote large."

For the ordinance, now before us, was only one, out of several public acts, that breathed the same intolerant, dogmatical spirit; and had the same baneful aspect on the inquiries of the candid, and on the rights of conscience.

The fact is, that the question concerning the rights of conscience, had not been brought into a discussion; or, at least, the inquiry was only in its infancy. The object of contest, between the episcopalians and presbyterians, had been, not to establish and enlarge the general liberty, but to gain power to themselves, and to give security to their own professions and opinions, under an idea

* Robinson's *Plan of lectures on the principles of nonconformity*. 5th ed. 1781. p. 39, 40.

that their own creed, their own mode of worship alone, was scriptural; and, when established, was to be maintained and protected by all the efforts of authority.

In the course of the contest, the presbyterians, for a few years, gained the superiority. All those measures were then right, which before they felt to be unjust and oppressive; because now they were used in the cause of God and truth. Power blinded and corrupted *them*, as it had done before the episcopalians. An ecclesiastical hierarchy, in every nation, in every age, under all civil revolutions, has been inimical to truth, and a bar to reformation.

In Scotland the presbyterian hierarchy is meliorated by its neighbourhood to this country, and its union with the episcopalian hierarchy under the same king. But in Geneva, and in Holland, where it reigns, exempt from the influence and controul of a different and powerful body of men, it is by no means favourable to liberty and free inquiry. The severity of the placarts, in the latter of these countries, has been a bar to the translation of the *Memoirs of the life and writings of Faustus Socinus* into Dutch. No bookseller there having the courage to appear as the publisher of it. At Dort, the translation of Dr. Priestley's *History of the corruptions of christianity* has been strictly prohibited.

prohibited. And it may, on good information, be asserted, that the sermons of the established clergy of Holland have, in general, little of any moral instruction; but the strain of them is dogmatical and intolerant.

It is an honour to the english protestant dissenters of this day, and a ground of devout thankfulness, that presbyterianism hath no existence amongst them. They who, very improperly, are called presbyterians, as consistent protestants, and as genuine advocates for liberty, have no rivals, and but few equals*.

But it is time to drop this subject, and to return to Mr. Biddle, to whom, it was expected that the ordinance, which has led us into these reflexions, would have proved fatal. Had it been more confined in its direction, it could scarcely have failed of being destructive to him. But its force was directed to so many objects, and so various, that it would have involved, in the execution of its sentence, many whom not only policy taught, but necessity constrained, them to spare. For, in the army, from which quarter the authority of parliament met with considerable opposi-

* See to this effect the animated and eloquent discourses delivered before the friends of the New Academy at Manchester, in 1786, particularly Mr. Harrison's sermon, p. 25, &c.

tion, numbers, both of foldiers and officers, were liable to the feverities of this act. On this account, and becaufe there was a diffenfion in the parliament itfelf, it lay unregarded for feveral years.

SECTION VII.

Mr. Biddle's Sufferings from 1648 to 1651. His subsequent enlargement and improvement of it.

THOUGH the circumftances noticed in the clofe of the laft fection enervated, to a great degree, the force of that shocking ordinance, which was aimed at Mr. Biddle's life, yet he fuffered for feveral years, the miferies of a fevere imprifonment. It derived, however, fome mitigation, and indeed, enlargement through the death of Charles I.

In the fubfequent confufion of the times, arifing from the oppofition that the commonwealth met with from the royalifts, the fcofs and the irifh, and from the conduct of the prefbyterians towards the new government, the attention of the parliament and of the prefbyterians was naturally drawn off from religious difputes to the eftablifhment of their power and influence in the political fcale.

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The parliament also interfered with explicit and direct exertions in favour of toleration.

For Cromwell, before he embarked for Ireland, which he was appointed to reduce, sent letters to the parliament, urging the repeal of all the penal laws relating to religion. His application was supported by a petition from general Fairfax, and his council of officers, praying that all penal statutes formerly made, whereby many conscientious people were molested, might be removed. This petition was favourably received, and, after some time, passed into a law.

Though it does not appear that Mr. Biddle, in consequence of this, was dismissed from prison by a legal and official discharge, yet, for the present, these measures were favourable to him. His keeper allowed him more liberty, and permitted him, upon security being given, even to go into Staffordshire. Here the obloquy and confinement, which he had suffered, were, in some degree, soothed and counterbalanced, by the patronage and kindness of a justice of the peace, who received him into his house, courteously entertained him, made him his chaplain, and appointed him to be a preacher of a church in that county, and at his death left him a legacy; which was a very reasonable supply to him, as he had already spent nearly all his substance in about four years charge-
able

able restraint*. One regrets, that the memoirs of Mr. Biddle have not perpetuated the name of the gentleman who acted this excellent part. He evidenced a laudable superiority to vulgar prejudices, in not being ashamed of this persecuted man; and he manifested a christian benevolence and fortitude, in affording to him his patronage, and in ministering to his wants. It is a pleasing thought, that though the names of those who perform such good deeds, should be lost to the world, they are on everlasting record in the books of heaven.

Mr. Biddle was not long permitted to enjoy the ease and comfort of his friendly asylum, for sir John Bradshaw, president of the council of state, being informed of his retreat, issued out orders for his being recalled, and more strictly confined. In this long confinement, which lasted to February, 1651, what proved most grievous to him, was that by reason of his lying under the imputation of blasphemy and heresy, the minds of people were either so alienated from him, or so intimidated with an apprehension of incurring the same odium, should they shew him any kind and respectful attention, that he was cut off from all the intercourses of life, and could hardly have

* British Biography, v. 6. p. 85.

any one to converse with. In particular, no divine, except Mr. Peter Gunning, afterwards bishop of Ely, during his seven years confinement, ever paid him a visit, not even to attempt to convince him of his errors. A good man, suffering for conscience and his love of truth, must be very sensibly affected with a treatment, which expresses not only neglect, but contempt and hatred.

A worthy successor to Mr. Biddle, in the like sufferings, and for the same cause, the excellent Mr. Emlyn, felt the full force of this trial. "During this more than two whole years imprisonment," says he, "my former acquaintance (how intimate soever before) were altogether estranged from me, and all offices of civility in a manner ceased; especially among them of superior rank, though a few of the plainer tradesmen of my own people were more compassionate and kind. O! my God, what a change hast thou made in my outward condition! I had a tolerable esteem, and a multitude of friends, but am now become their scorn and bye-word, and my acquaintance and friends stand afar off*."

Thus bigotry cancels the bonds of life, and heretical pravity is looked on as more criminal

* Emlyn's Works, vol. 1. p. 36. 4th ed. 1746. Memoirs of his life, p. 32.

than the most heinous acts of immorality. A robber and a murderer is treated according to the rights of humanity, and is indulged with the visit of sympathy and friendship, which is denied to the man who deviates from the prevailing faith, though his character in every other respect is blameless and excellent; denied by those, who profess a religion which inculcates *visiting the prisoner*, as an expression of respect, of attachment, and gratitude, to its great author. But so it pleaseth providence, that the cup of which the sufferer for righteousness sake partaketh, should be mingled with every bitter ingredient, to try his faith, to exalt his virtue, and to shew the power of truth, surmounting, in the end, every evil and difficulty.

In the experience of Mr. Biddle, poverty was added to imprisonment and the neglect of mankind. Notwithstanding the recruit which his fortune had received from the legacy just mentioned, his substance, in the course of seven years confinement, was all spent, and he was reduced to such indigence, that, unable to pay for the ordinary repast of the table, he was glad, says his biographer, "of the cheaper support of drinking, a draught of milk from the cow, morning and evening."

When he was reduced to this situation, and had been so long precluded from all the means of

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support,

support, which the benevolence of others, or his own industry, might supply, divine providence did not leave him to perish through want, but opened for him an unexpected resource. Mr. Roger Daniel, a printer, of London, formed at that time the design of publishing a new and most accurate edition of the greek version of the old Testament, called the Septuagint. At the recommendation of a learned man, he employed Mr. Biddle to correct the impression, knowing full well, says Mr. Wood, that Biddle was an exact grecian, and had time enough to follow it. This was an employment not only seasonable, but most acceptable to Mr. Biddle, "whose delight," observes the writer of his life, "was in the law of God. This, and another employment of a more private nature, did, for some time, furnish him with a comfortable subsistence*."

In the year 1651, such public measures were taken, as, by their operation, were favourable to our virtuous sufferer; for the parliament published an act of indemnity for all crimes; with a few exceptions, which did not reach the case of those who were confined for advancing and disseminating what were deemed heretical opinions. This act restored, among others, Mr. Biddle to full liberty.

* Wood's *Athenæ Oxonienses*. Art. Biddle.

In consequence of the pieces he had published, and of the severe proceedings against him, it appears, that an attention to the general question was awakened; and some had been made converts to his principles, particularly in London. The liberty which he now obtained, was improved by his meeting, on every Lord's day, with those friends he had gained in the city, for the purpose of expounding the scriptures, and discoursing thereon.

The principle, on which Mr. Biddle and his adherents first formed themselves into a distinct and separate society was, that the *unity of God is an unity of person as well as nature*; that the holy spirit is indeed a person, but not God. The object of their religious association was to exert their endeavours, that the honour of almighty God should not be transferred to another. For, as Mr. Biddle urges, in a piece before quoted, "God is jealous of his honour, and will not give it to another; we, therefore, as beloved children, should imitate our heavenly Father herein, and not, upon any pretence whatsoever, depart from his express command, and give the worship of the supreme Lord of heaven and earth to him whom the scripture nowhere affirmeth to be God."

Mr. Biddle's society, emancipated from the restraints of an establishment, and assembling together,

ther, not only for the purpose of divine worship, but for freely investigating theological questions, adopted some other discriminating notions. Such as these ; “ that the fathers under the old covenant had only temporal promises ; that saving faith consisted in universal obedience performed to the commands of God and Christ ; that Christ rose again only by the power of his Father, not his own ; that *justifying faith* is not the pure gift of God, but may be acquired by men’s natural abilities ; that faith cannot believe any thing contrary to, or above reason ; that there is no *original sin* ; that Christ hath not the same body now in glory, in which he suffered and rose again ; that the saints shall not have the same body in heaven which they had on earth ; that Christ was not *lord or king* before his resurrection, or *priest* before his ascension ; that the saints shall not, before the day of judgment, enjoy the bliss of heaven ; that God doth not certainly know future contingencies ; that there is not any authority of fathers or general councils in determining matters of faith ; that Christ before his death had not any dominion over the angels ; and that Christ, by dying, made no satisfaction for us *.”

* See the Preface to Sir Peter Pett’s *Happy future state of England* † as quoted by Mosheim’s translator. Mosheim’s *Ecclesiastical history*, vol. v. p. 56. note (*rr*) of the 2d edition in octavo, 1767.

The members of this society were called from Mr. Biddle, their head and pastor, "bidellians," and from their agreement in opinion, concerning the unity of God, and the humanity of Christ, with the followers of Socinus, they were denominated "socinians." "They followed indeed, at first, Mr. Biddle (as he espoused the tenets of Socinus) but so, that as soon as there appeared better light, (to use a scripture phrase) *they rejoiced in it.*" The name which most properly characterised their leading sentiment and detachment from an implicit adherence to any teacher, was that of "unitarians."

This was the rise of the *english unitarians*, to whose honour it was said, that "besides an acuteness and dexterity of thought, they were excellently learned, especially in sacred criticism." But "that which most commended them, was the freedom and sincerity, which they all along practised, in judging of the controverted articles of religion."

It is justice to the worthy persons themselves, and useful to posterity and the cause of truth, to perpetuate, if possible, the names of those who have been its patrons and advocates, or sufferers for it; and who, by their exertions, though not by their pen, have contributed to the spread of religious knowledge and free inquiry. We regret

it, that of those who were Mr. Biddle's friends, and members of the church which he raised, only two names have been preserved to us, those of Mr. Nathaniel Stuckey and Mr. Thomas Firmin.

The first was a young gentleman, eminent for his distinguished parts and early piety. He was born in 1649. At the age of fifteen he published a latin translation of Mr. Biddle's scripture catechism, for the use of foreigners; and in the next year 1665, he printed a latin version of Mr. Biddle's *Brief catechism for children*; to which he annexed an oration of his own, in the same language, on the sufferings and death of Christ *. This young man died at the age of seventeen †.

* To this edition of Mr. Biddle's catechetical pieces was also subjoined, a letter addressed to him by Jeremiah Felbinger, a zealous unitarian, who was born in Silesia, but having been obliged often to change his residence on account of his sentiments, died in Amsterdam, where he supported himself by the care of a school, and correcting the press. The purport of the letter just mentioned, was to express his joy in the acquisition of such a man to the party of the antitrinitarians; and to convey his earnest wishes, supported by various arguments, that he would go on to exert himself in the same cause, and would disseminate the sentiments he adopted, not only in England, but in the new world. Vide Fr. Sam. Beck *Historia antitrinitariorum*, vol. 2. 8vo. 1776. Art. Felbingerius.

† Sandii *Bibliotheca antitrinitariorum*. Art. Bidellius & Felbingerius.

But

But the greatest honour and support were derived to Mr. Biddle and his cause from the friendship and exertions of Mr. Thomas Firmin, the friend and intimate of the doctors Outram, Whichcote and Worthington, and of the bishops Wilkins, Tillotson and Fowler; a man of eminent piety and superior virtue; who, for active and generous benevolence, has had few equals in any age. Bishop Burnet says of him, that "he was in great esteem for promoting many charitable designs, for looking after the poor of the city, and setting them to work: for raising great sums for schools and hospitals, and indeed for charities of all sorts, private and public. He had such credit with the richest citizens, that he had the command of great wealth as often as there was occasion for it *." His time was devoted to benevolent exertions; his fortune was laid out in liberal munificent deeds. The hospitals of St. Thomas and of Christ particularly felt the influence, and continue to enjoy the good effects, of his generosity and activity. In the cloister of the latter, a marble records and perpetuates the praises of his wonderful zeal and charity †.

* Bishop Burnett's History of his own times, v. 2, octavo, p. 292.

† For a full account of his most useful and generous deeds, see his life written by "one of his most intimate acquaintance," and more lately by Mr. Cornish.

Mr.

Mr. Firmin, besides being the personal friend of Mr. Biddle, continued, after his decease, and until after the revolution, with much vigour and assiduity, to promote the reception of his opinions. He encouraged many publications in defence of the unity of God, which he dispersed over the nation, distributing them freely to all who would accept of them. He had a particular concern in the publication of several volumes of unitarian tracts in quarto, which issued forth from the press about the time of the revolution.

Mr. Firmin was a very young man when Mr. Biddle's society was first formed ; and it does not appear that it subsisted after the death of its founder, who did not attempt to bring his friends into such close bonds of union, as would preserve them a distinct community after his removal. The force of the testimony, which was borne to the doctrine of the divine unity by the writings of the unitarians, could not but be greatly diminished by the dissolution of Mr. Biddle's society. It is to be lamented, that Mr. Firmin, in particular, did not exert himself to keep together this body of unitarians, or that, if, as one would hope, he did take some steps with this design, they were not successful.

SECTION VIII.

Mr. Biddle's Dispute with Dr. Gunning, and Publication of his Catechism.

WHILE Mr. Biddle and his friends enjoyed the liberty of holding religious assemblies, Dr. Gunning, afterwards regius professor of divinity at Cambridge, and bishop of Ely, who had visited Mr. Biddle in prison, and was eminent as a learned man, and as a ready acute disputant, came on a lord's day, in the year 1654, to their meeting, accompanied with some learned friends. His conduct soon explained his intentions and views, that they were, not to be an hearer of Mr. Biddle, and a witness of the order of his worship, but publicly and before his own adherents, to confound and confute him. For he commenced a disputation with him, on the first time, concerning the deity of the holy spirit; and then, on the next lord's day, concerning the supreme deity of Christ. The disputation was carried on in the syllogistic mode, and they took their turns of responding and opposing.

Mr. Biddle was evidently taken at a great disadvantage, as he was suddenly surprised into a debate, without any preparation for it. But this circum-

circumstance contributed to display both his furniture and abilities, and to shew how much he had studied the questions, and was master of the argument. For his biographer informs us, that Mr. Biddle acquitted himself with so much learning, judgment, and knowledge in the sense of the holy scriptures, that instead of losing, he gained much credit both to himself and his cause, as even some of the gentlemen of Dr. Gunning's party had the ingenuity to acknowledge*."

But the doctor, unwilling to sit down as foiled, or presuming on his own superiority in another question, surprised Mr. Biddle a third time, and finding him in the discussion of the argument against the satisfaction of punitive justice by the death of Christ, he defended that sentiment with great vigour. But on this, as on the former occasions, he met with a skilful and dexterous opponent; which he had the generosity afterwards to confess.

This method of attack, by intruding unawares, upon a religious society, and interrupting their worship, or by discussing controverted points in a public disputation, hath, very properly, been laid aside, and given way, in our more liberal age, to the use of the pen. There was a rudeness and a

* Unitarian tracts. Biddle's life, p 6, 7.

violence in it, from which modern politeness is justly averse; and it favoured more of the spirit of contention, and an eagerness for victory, than of the love of truth. Yet public disputation was a mode of opposing supposed error, generally practised through Europe, from the time of the reformation till the close of the last century. Whatever advantage might arise from such public discussion of theological questions, by awakening the attention of men, and exciting them to think and inquire on subjects, to which perhaps they would not, otherwise, have turned their thoughts: yet they were productive of much evil, by inflaming the spirits of men. They thus tended to beget in some a dislike, and in others a contempt of religious debate; while the prevailing party took occasion to triumph with all the insolence of power.

But to return—this year of Mr. Biddle's life was distinguished more by the publication of two *catechetical* pieces, than by his public disputations with Dr. Gunning. They were entitled, “A
 “ Two-fold catechism; the one simply called *A*
 “ *Scripture catechism*; the other *A Brief scripture*
 “ *catechism* for children; wherein the chiefest
 “ points of the christian religion, being question-
 “ wise proposed, resolve themselves by pertinent
 “ answers taken word for word out of the scrip-
 “ ture, without either consequences or comments.
 “ Composed

“ Composed for their sakes that would fain be
 “ *mere christians*, and not of this or that sect, in-
 “ asmuch as all the sects of christians; by what
 “ names soever distinguished, have more or less
 “ departed from the simplicity and truth of the
 “ scripture.” The discriminating title of the
 other runs, *A Brief scripture catechism for chil-*
dren; wherein, notwithstanding the brevity there-
 of, all things necessary unto life and godliness are
 contained. By John Biddle, master of arts, of
 the university of Oxford.

In the preface to the first of these, Mr. Biddle
 complains, that all catechisms were generally so fil-
 led with the suppositions and traditions of men;
 that “ the least part of them was derived from the
 word of God.” For, says he, “ when councils,
 convocations, and assemblies of divines, justling
 the sacred writers out of their place in the church,
 had once framed articles and confessions of faith
 according to their own fancies and interests, and
 the civil magistrate had by his authority ratified the
 same, all catechisms were afterwards fitted to those
 articles and confessions, and the scripture either
 wholly omitted, or brought in, only for a shew, not
 one quotation amongst many being a whit to the
 purpose, as will appear to any man of judgment,
 who taking into his hands the said catechisms,
 shall examine the texts alledged in them; for if he
 do

do this diligently and impartially, he will find the scripture and those catechisms to be "at so wide a distance from one another, that he will begin to question, whether the catechists gave any heed at all to what they wrote, and did not only themselves refuse to make use of their reason, but presume that their readers also would do the same."

To prevent the evils of this method, Mr. Biddle professes, that, according to the understanding he had obtained by continual meditation on the word of God, he had compiled his scripture catechism; in which he himself asserted nothing, but only introduced the scripture faithfully uttering its own assertions, which all christians confess to be of undoubted truth.

Mr. Biddle, aware that his catechism would exhibit sentiments contrary to the current opinion of the age, cautions his reader against taking offence at them. "Take heed that thou fall not foul upon them, for thou canst not do so, without falling upon the holy scripture itself, inasmuch as all the answers throughout the whole catechism are faithfully transcribed out of it, and rightly applied to the questions, as thou thyself mayest perceive, if thou shalt make a diligent inspection into the several texts, with all their circumstances."

He was apprehensive that objection would

the schools, whether the old ship of Theseus (which had in a manner been wholly altered at sundry times, by the accession of new pieces of timber upon the decay of the old) were the same ship it had been at first, and not rather another by degrees substituted in the stead thereof. In like manner, there was so much of the primitive truth worn away by the corruption, that did by little and little overspread the generality of christians, and so many errors instead thereof tacked to our religion at several times, that one might justly question, whether it were the same religion with that which Christ and his apostles taught, and not another since devised by men, and put in the room thereof.

“ But thanks be to God, through our lord Jesus Christ, who, amidst the universal corruption of our religion, hath preserved his written word entire, (for had men corrupted it, they would have made it speak more favourably in behalf of their lusts and worldly interests, than it doth) which word, if we with diligence and sincerity pry into, resolving to embrace the doctrine that is there plainly delivered, though all the world should set itself against us for so doing, we shall easily discern the truth, and so be able to reduce our religion to its first principles.

“ For thus much I perceive by my own experience,

rience, who being otherwise of no great abilities, yet setting myself with the aforefaid resolution, for sundry years together, upon an impartial search of the scripture, have not only detected many errors, but presented the readers with a body of religion, exactly transcribed out of the word of God; which body, whosoever shall well ruminate and digest in his mind, may, by the same method wherein I have gone before him, make a further inquiry into the oracles of God, and draw forth whatsoever yet lies hid, and being brought to light, will tend to the accomplishment of godliness amongst us, for at this only aimeth the scripture, which all men, who have thoroughly studied the same, must of necessity be enamoured with, as breathing out the mere wisdom of God, and being the exactest rule of a holy life (which all religions whatsoever confess to be the way unto happiness) that can be imagined, and whose divinity will never, even to the world's end, be questioned by any but such as are unwilling to deny their worldly lusts, and obey the pure and perfect precepts. Which obedience, whosoever shall perform, he shall not only in the life to come, but even in this life, be equal to the angels."

Mr. Biddle's *scripture catechism*, which is introduced by these reflexions, is divided into twenty-

four chapters; comprising a system of speculative and practical theology. The subjects are, of the holy scripture, or word of God; of God; of the creation; of Christ Jesus; of the holy ghost; of salvation by Christ; of Christ's mediation; of Christ's prophetic office; of remission of sins by Christ; of Christ's kingly office; of Christ's priestly office; of Christ's death; of the universality of God's love; of Christ's resurrection; of justification and faith; of keeping the commandments, and having an eye to the reward; of perfection in virtue and godliness to be attained, and of departing from righteousness and faith; of the duty of subjects and magistrates; wives and husbands, children and parents, servants and masters; of the behaviour of men and women in general, and in special, of aged men, aged women, young women and young men; of prayer; of the church; of the government and discipline of the church; of baptism; of the lord's supper; of the resurrection of the dead, and the last judgment; and what shall be the final condition of the righteous and the wicked thereupon.

This piece, though drawn up purely in the words of scripture, was formed with a pointed reference to the opinions, which he conceived had no foundation in the scriptures; and many of his quotations were so constructed as to introduce the

texts

texts which appeared, explicitly and plainly, to stand in contrast with those sentiments. For instance,

In the chapter on GOD, there is this general question concerning the love of the divine Being: Could we love him with *all the heart*, if he were *three*? Or is his *Oneness* the cause hinted by Moses, why we should love him thus? How sound the words according to the truth of the hebrew text? See Ainsworth's translation.

Answer.—“Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is ONE.” Deut. vi. 4.

In the chapter on the kingly office of Christ, there is another example of this pointed reference, viz. “Ought men to honour the son as they honour the Father, because he hath the *same essence* with the Father, or because he hath the same judiciary power?” What is the decision of the son himself concerning this point? Answer. “The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the son; that all men should honour the son, even as they honour the Father.” John v. 22, 23. 2. Did the Father give judiciary power to the son, because he had in him the *divine nature personally united to the human*; or because he was the *son of man*? What is the decision of the son concerning this point also? Answer. “He hath given him au-
thority

thority to execute judgement, because *he is the son of man.*"

On the head of justification we meet also with some questions, close and pointed, after the same manner. E. g. 2. In the justification of a believer, is the righteousness of Christ imputed to him, or his own faith for righteousness? Anf. "To him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, *his faith is counted for righteousness.*" 2. Doth not God justify men, because of the full price that *Christ* paid to him in their stead, so that he abated nothing of his right, in that one drop of *Christ's* blood is sufficient to satisfy for a thousand worlds? If not, how are they saved? Anf. "Being justified **FREELY** by his grace, through the redemption, that is in *Christ Jesus*; in whom we have redemption through his blood, the *forgiveness of sin*, according to the *riches of his grace*, Rom. iii. 24. Eph. i. 7.

Should it be thought that this mode of introducing and refuting the sentiments of others, has too much the air of controversy, perfectly to suit the design of a catechism professedly scriptural; it must be allowed to be a pertinent and forcible way of bringing into view texts that seemed to be overlooked; and of shewing that the language of the other party was totally unscriptural, and their
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conclusions from some particular passages absolutely repugnant to the plain declarations of other texts.

The catechism which we have reviewed, was too prolix for the attention and memory of children; of this Mr. Biddle appears to have been fully sensible; for, as it has been noticed, he connected with it another catechetical composition, called, "A brief catechism for children:" "whether," he says in the preface, "in years or understanding; that they might receive true and solid information concerning the chief articles of the christian faith."

"Yea," he adds, "perhaps it may (as well as the larger catechism going before) give further light and instruction even to them, who seem to have attained a full stature in the knowledge of the gospel. For, though all the things, whether of belief or practice, that are either necessary or very profitable to the attainment of eternal life, be plainly delivered in the scripture, yet, considering in what principles christians are generally educated, it would perhaps have been impossible for them, having the eyes of their understanding so veiled with prejudicate opinions, to see what is clearly held forth in the scripture, and accordingly with ease fetched out from hence by me, who have long since discarded prejudices, and am,
(through

(through the special favour of Jesus Christ towards me) addicted to none of those many factions in religion, whereinto the christian world hath, to its infinite hurt, been divided, but rejoice to be a *mere christian*, admitting (as I have elsewhere-declared) no other rule of faith than the holy scripture, (which all christians, though otherwise at infinite variance amongst themselves in their opinions about religion, unanimously acknowledge to be the word of God,) nor any other interpreter, if a doubt arise about the meaning of the scripture, than reason; which all sober men confess to be the only principle that God hath implanted in us to judge between right and wrong, good and bad, and whereby we excel all other living creatures whatsoever."

"The lord Jesus grant, that this and the foregoing larger catechism may, by the readers, be perused as profitably, as I have willingly to that end communicated the same unto them."

"The *Brief catechism* is divided into ten chapters; treating, in succession, of the scripture, or word of God; of God; of Jesus Christ; of the holy spirit and of the trinity; of the death, resurrection, ascension, and exaltation of Christ; of mortification and holiness; of the commandments, and so of love to God and men; of faith; of the church;

church ; of the resurrection of the dead ; and of the last judgment.

These catechisms alarmed the advocates for the orthodox faith ; and the authority of the scripture language and declarations, under which the writers took shelter, was insufficient to protect him from a prosecution, and his book from an ignominious censure.

The parliament condemned, in particular, these propositions : (1.) “ That God is confined to a certain place. (2.) That he has a bodily shape. (3.) That he has passions. (4.) That he is neither omnipotent nor unchangeable. (5.) That we are not to believe three persons in the Godhead. (6.) That Jesus Christ has not the nature of God, but only a divine lordship. (7.) That he was not a priest while upon earth, nor did reconcile men to God. And (8.) That there is no deity in the holy ghost*.

Considering the very limited state of free inquiry, at that time, it is rather surprising that a ninth proposition, or ground of charge, against Mr. Biddle had not been added ; viz. the future annihilation of the wicked, or that they would not, as the godly and faithful, “ live for ever,” but be “ destroyed, corrupted, burnt up, devoured, slain, pass

* Neal's History of the puritans, v. iv. p. 135. 8vo.

away,

away, and perish." For he produced many texts to exhibit this view of future punishments.

The propositions, which they did deduce from these catechetical pieces, were deemed sufficient grounds for proceeding, with severity, against Mr. Biddle. A learned modern writer, who does not adopt the author's peculiar sentiments, has observed of "the scripture catechism," that it discovers an enlargement of mind, a liberality of sentiment, and a sincerity, in freely publishing what he apprehended to be truth, which do honour to his memory*." But the age in which it was published, as we have seen, was by no means disposed to treat those compositions or writers, that discarded or opposed the prevailing faith, with candour or equity. Of which Mr. Biddle, on this occasion, had new experience.

He was brought to the bar of the house of commons, which the protector Cromwell had convened; and was examined whether he was the author of that *two-fold scripture catechism*, wherein all the questions are answered in the words of scripture at large. Mr. Biddle, to these interrogatories, wisely made a reply, which at once conveyed an appeal to the principles of equity, and expressed his just expectations from the genius of

* Harwood, on the sotinian scheme, p. 22.

the english constitution. For he answered by asking, " Whether it seemed reasonable that one brought before a judgment-seat, as a criminal, should accuse himself?" The reason, which this answer carried in it, was not admitted as a bar to the proceedings against him; but on the 3d of December he was committed close prisoner to the gate-house, and forbidden the use of pen, ink, and paper, and denied the access of any visitant.

In this case, nothing less than a capital judgment was to be expected; a bill was accordingly brought in for punishing him. In this situation Mr. Biddle preserved a composed and cheerful mind, and maintained his hope of an happy event from the providence of God, in whose cause he suffered. His hope did not fail him; for the protector, induced by reasons drawn from his own interest, dissolved the parliament; and the prisoner, after ten months imprisonment, obtained his liberty, May 28, by due course of law*.

The resentment of government pursued the book as well as the author; for an order was issued out, that the catechism should be burnt by the hands of the common hangman; which was accordingly done on the 14th of December. This

* Unitarian tracts, vol. i. 4to. The life of Biddle, p. 7. and British biography, vol. vi. 8vo. p. 86.

mode of casting an odium upon particular writings, hath been practised by all governments, and in all ages*. The disgrace ultimately falls on those who adopt this measure: for it indicates the weakness of their cause, or the indolence of its partisans. They either have not the ability, or will not be at the pains, to discuss and refute the opinions they would suppress. It is a method of dismissing, as much within the power of the ignorant, as the learned; and of the fool, as of the wise man. And, after all, though a book may be burned, an impression cannot be annihilated in one fire. Copies will be secretly preserved and read; and will, in a future unprejudiced age, bring forward the question, if it hath been judiciously stated, and closely argued, to disgrace the memory of those who would have stifled inquiry.

It is however but justice to the times of which we write, to say, that while the ruling powers prosecuted and imprisoned Mr. Biddle, and burnt his catechisms, some pursued a more fair and rational mode of exposing the supposed weakness of his arguments, and investigating the truth of his opinions. Mr. Nicholas Estwick, of Wakton, in Northamptonshire, and some time fellow of

* Cicero de naturâ deorum, curâ Davissii, l. i. c. 23. Milutius Felix, curâ Davissii, cap. 8. Taciti Annales, l. iv. cap. 35.

Christ's college, in Cambridge, published a professed Examination and confutation of Mr. Biddle's confession of faith concerning the holy trinity. And, to the honour of the leading men in the state, it should be mentioned, that they availed themselves of the learning and abilities of the celebrated Dr. Owen to discuss, from the press, the positions of Mr. Biddle's catechisms. For at the command of the right honourable the council of state, he drew up and published his *VINDICIÆ EVANGELICÆ*; or the mystery of the gospel vindicated, and socinianism examined, in the consideration and confutation of a catechism, called a *scripture catechism*, written by J. Biddle, A. M. Mr. Neal has called this work a learned and elaborate treatise. The celebrity of Mr. Biddle's writings was not confined to England, they were attended to abroad, and several foreigners published refutations of his sentiments*.

Another effect of Mr. Biddle's catechetical publication was, that to guard the minds of people, especially of the rising generation, from what were deemed heretical sentiments, the provincial assembly at London published *An exhortation to catechising*, with directions for the more regular con-

* Bock *Historia antitrinitariorum*, tom. i. par. 2. p. 54.

ducting of it. These instructions were sent to the several classes of London, and, after their example, the associated ministers in the several counties of England published the like exhortation to their brethren*.

This measure originated from zeal for a particular system, and certainly tended to fix in young minds strong prejudices in its favour; yet it was worthy of true piety and zeal, and may be supposed to have greatly contributed to prevent a pernicious and total ignorance of all religious principles.

SECTION IX.

A new prosecution commenced against Mr. Biddle.

It may be thought, that after having experienced such evils and sufferings for the open avowal and defence of his religious opinions, Mr. Biddle should have withdrawn from public notice, and have silently enjoyed his own view of things in private. The love of ease and safety would certainly have dictated this conduct, and worldly prudence would

* Neal's History of the puritans, vol. iv. p. 135 and 136. 8vo.

have approved it. But Mr. Biddle seems to have entertained other sentiments, and to have thought that personal comfort and safety ought to be sacrificed to truth, and our duty to God. Socrates, the grecian sage, thought so before him*. When he was pleading before his judges : “ Perhaps,” says he, “ some one will ask, Why can you not, So-
 “ crates, withdraw, and, banishing yourself from
 “ us, spend your life in silent and retired leisure ?
 “ It would be a most difficult matter to convince
 “ you that I cannot do this. Should I urge,
 “ that this would be to disobey God, and that
 “ therefore I cannot be silent, you would discredit
 “ me, as a dissembler. Were I to alledge, that
 “ to hold daily conversations on virtue and other
 “ topics, which you have heard that I canvas and
 “ investigate with others, is the greatest human
 “ felicity ; for a life spent without inquiry is not

* *Ισως ουν αν τις ειποι, Σιγην τε η ψυχιαν αγαπῶ, ο Σωκρατης, ψυχης τ' εση ημιν εξελθων ζην; Τουτε δε ες παλιν χαλεπωτατω πεισαι τινας υμων. παντε γαρ λεγω, οτι τω θεω απειθειν τούτ' εστι, και δια τουτ' αδηματον ψυχιαν αγαπῶ, ου πεισθε μοι, ως εισηκουμενων* εαν τ' αυθις λεγω, οτι η τυγχαναι μεγατον αγαθον αυθιςωπω τουτο; εμας ημερας περι αβιης τουτ' λογους ποιεισθαι, η των αλλων, περι αν υμεις εμου ηκουετε διαλεγομενου, η εμαυτον η αλλους εξεταζοντες (οδε ανεξεταστος βιος, ου βιωτος ανθρωπου) ταυτα διτι ητιον πεισισθε μοι λεγοντι. τα δε εχει μεν ουλας, ως εγω φημι, ο ανδρες, πειθειν δε ου ραδις. Platonis Dialog. V. cura Forster, p. 111, 112. &c Opera Platonis, quoted by Dr. Doddridge. Family Expositor, vol. iii. on Acts iv. 19. note (n).*

" a life for man : you would be as far from be-
 " lieving me. But things are as I represent them,
 " though it is not easy to persuade you of it.
 " If ye would dismiss me and spare my life, on
 " condition that I should leave off to teach my
 " fellow-citizens, I would rather die a thousand
 " times than accept the proposal."

Mr. Biddle's conduct had a superior sanction in
 that of the apostles ; who, when commanded by
 the jewish sanhedrim, not to speak at all, nor teach
 in the name of Jesus, answered, " Whether it be
 " right in the sight of God, to hearken unto you
 " more than unto God, judge ye." Acts iv. 19.
 A christian has more powerful reasons for a strict,
 open, and firm attachment to truth, than has an
 heathen philosopher ; for he has the word of God
 to direct his inquiries, and authorise his conduct,
 and he has the hope of immortality to support
 and animate his steady zeal.

Mr. Biddle, influenced by these considerations,
 so far from withdrawing from the scene of exer-
 tion and suffering, betook himself to his former
 exercises for propagating, what appeared to his
 mind, divine truth, as closely connected with the
 honour of almighty God. Scarcely, therefore,
 had a year expired, after he was released from the
 prosecution on account of his *Scripture catechism*,
 than a new danger, not less formidable, overtook
 him.

Notwith-

Notwithstanding the odium, under which his sentiments laid, and the offence they gave to the governing power, they began to be embraced by a considerable part of a baptist congregation under the pastoral care of Mr. Griffin; who took alarm at this infection, and, to stop its spread, challenged Mr. Biddle to a public disputation in his meeting-house at St. Paul's. Mr. Neal has, to whatever cause it was owing, given a representation of this matter not quite so honourable to Mr. Biddle, as the truth of the fact requires; for he says, that Mr. Biddle, being of a restless spirit, challenged Mr. Griffin; thus not only mistating the proceedings, as originating from Mr. Biddle, but uncandidly ascribing them to a wrong cause. It appears from Mr. Biddle's biographer, that he not only was not first in this business, but waved the challenge, and declined the disputation for some time. At length he met Mr. Griffin, amidst a numerous auditory, among whom were many of his bitter and fiery adversaries, especially some booksellers, notoriously known for their false zeal and former opposition to Christian liberty, under the name of *beacon friers* *.

* Neal's History of the puritans, vol. iv. p. 137. 8vo. Their names were Thomas Underhill, Luke Fawn, and Nathaniel Webb. See Crosby's History of the english baptists, vol. i. p. 209.

To introduce the debate, Mr. Griffin asked, "If any man there did deny, that *Christ* was God most high?" The event gave too much reason to apprehend, that the matter was thus opened, insidiously to draw from Mr. Biddle's own mouth, grounds of accusation. Mr. Biddle, with sincerity and firmness, replied, "I do deny it." Mr. Griffin, on this, it should seem, entered into a proof of the affirmative; but, in the judgment of judicious hearers, was not able to support his cause against Mr. Biddle; and the disputation was adjourned to another day, when Mr. Biddle, it was agreed, should take his turn of establishing the negative side of the question between them.

Before that day came, other measures of confutation, besides fair discussion and argument, were adopted. The adversaries of Mr. Biddle laid hold of the open and generous profession he had made of his sentiments: information was lodged against him. He was apprehended and committed to the compter, July 3, 1655; from thence he was removed to Newgate, and was at the next sessions called to trial for his life, on the ordinance against blasphemy and heresy, which we have before mentioned. The iniquity of this proceeding was aggravated by its being founded on an act, which had never properly received the force of a law, and had, for several years, lain obsolete.

But

But the inveterate zeal of persecutors admits no measures of kindness or equity. The manner of conducting this prosecution against Mr. Biddle, as well as the grounds on which it was commenced, afforded a proof of this. For when he prayed, that counsel might be allowed him to plead the illegality of the indictment, it was denied him by the judges, and the sentence of a mute threatened. Upon this he gave into court his exceptions engrossed on parchment, and, with much struggling, had counsel allowed him; but the trial was deferred to the next day.

In this emergency, the principles and policy of Oliver Cromwell operated in favour of Mr. Biddle. The protector was an enemy to persecution; and among the capital articles, on which his government was formed, were these liberal ones, viz. "That such as profess faith in God, by Jesus Christ, (though differing in judgment from the doctrine, worship, or discipline publicly held forth) shall not be restrained from; but shall be protected in the profession of the faith, and exercise of their religion; and that all laws, statutes, and ordinances, &c. to the contrary of the aforesaid liberty, shall be esteemed null and void. It was also his art, by dexterous management, to keep the opposite parties, then in the nation, in a kind of equipoise, which he found necessary for his
own

own security. He saw it was not for the interest of his government to have Mr. Biddle either condemned or absolved. He therefore took him out of the hands of the law, and detained him in prison. His release would have offended the presbyterians and all the enemies to religious liberty, of whom there appeared a great number at his trial. On the contrary, the proceedings against Mr. Biddle were opposed by the friends of liberty; they were censured and reprobated by different publications from the press. And while petitions were, by one party presented against him, the other did not lie dormant, but solicited his discharge, and urged their suit by pointed remonstrances against that ordinance, as threatening all their liberties, and infringing the fundamental articles of the protector's government. Many congregations of baptists appeared on this occasion, as friends to Mr. Biddle, and advocates for the rights of conscience. At length Cromwell, wearied with petitions, for and against, to terminate the affair, and, in some degree meet the wishes of each party, banished Mr. Biddle to the isle of Scilly, whither he was sent October 5, 1655.*

* Short account of the life of John Biddle, p. 7, 8. and Crosby's history of the english baptists, vol. 1. p. 206. 215.

Disagreeable and afflictive, as must be this state of exile, it was rather a shelter from the vindictive spirit of his enemies, and was a means of preventing another parliament, under the protector, from decreeing any thing more rigid against him, as he was absent and out of their way. The inconveniences and wants of his situation were also relieved by the kindness of the protector himself; who, after some time, allowed him in his exile an hundred crowns per annum for his subsistence; which, as an act of pure generosity, shewn to a persecuted man, whose tenets could not be agreeable to Cromwell, reflects honour on his name.

The evils of Mr. Biddle's banishment were, in other respects, alleviated; especially by the state of his mind, and the employment of his thoughts. "Here, his biographer informs us, he enjoyed much divine comfort from the heavenly contemplations, for which his retirement gave him opportunity. Here he had sweet communion with the Father, and his son Jesus Christ, and attained, in many particulars, a clearer understanding of the divine oracles. Here, whilst he was more abundantly confirmed in the doctrines of his confession of faith, &c. yet he seems, notwithstanding, to have become more doubtful about some other points which he formerly held; as appears from his *Essay to explaining the revelation*, which he wrote

wrote after his return thence; which shews that he still maintained a free and unprejudiced mind*.

Though Mr. Biddle's banishment lasted three years, his friends were not regardless of his interest and liberty; but were active in their endeavours to procure his release. He himself wrote letters, both to the protector and to Mr. Calamy, an eminent presbyterian minister, to reason them into compassion, but without immediate success. It may, perhaps, be offered in extenuation of Mr. Calamy's apparent neglect of Mr. Biddle's applications, that in Oliver's time he kept himself as private as he could. At length, the solicitations of friends, favoured by the operation of other occurrences, prevailed, and the protector permitted a writ of habeas corpus to be granted out of the upper-bench court, whereby Mr. Biddle was brought back, and by that court set at liberty, as finding no legal cause of detaining him.

A short account, &c. p. 8. PALMER'S, Nonconformist's memorial, vol. 1. p. 4.

SECTION X.

His renewal of his public Ministrations—his last imprisonment—and Death.

THE reflexions, with which we opened the preceding chapter, are equally pertinent to the conduct of Mr. Biddle, which we are to review in this. He still preserved the firmness of his mind. He still felt the ardor of zeal. Notwithstanding the dangers, sufferings, and persecutions, which he had sustained, he was not terrified from what he counted his duty to Christ, in propagating the true knowledge of the only true God, and of Jesus Christ, whom he had sent. Upon his return to London, he resumed his religious exercises among his friends, and acted as pastor to a congregation in the city, formed on the principles of the independents*.

The national affairs soon took a turn unfavourable to Mr. Biddle's prosecution of his delightful work. For, about five months after, the protector died, and Richard succeeding, called a parliament, which, it was supposed, would be

* British biography, 8vo. vol. vi. p. 87.

particularly inimical to him. At the importunity of a noble friend, he reluctantly retired into the country, during their session. On the dissolution of that parliament, he returned to his former station.

This period of tranquility, and of his ministerial services, was but of short duration. The enjoyment of religious liberty was, in those times, fluctuating and precarious, dependent upon the state of political affairs, and changing with the national revolutions. Of this Mr. Biddle had repeated experience. And though the reign of his enemies, the presbyterians, was now drawing to its close, its termination afforded him no security; but, by the change of government, he was involved in new difficulties and dangers; and became a sufferer in common with those, from whose hands he had a little before suffered. With the settlement of CHARLES II. on the throne of his ancestors, the ancient government in the church and state was restored. The presbyterians soon felt the iron hand of power, and all dissenters from the episcopal worship were treated on the same intolerant principles. Their liberty was taken away, and their meetings were punished as seditious.

Mr. Biddle endeavoured to avoid the threatening storm, by restraining himself from public to more private assemblies. But his prudence and
caution

caution were ineffectual. The retired and peaceable associations of himself and his adherents could not elude the jealous eye of magistracy by their secrecy, nor disarm its rage by their harmlessness. For, on the first of June, 1662, he was haled from his lodgings, where he and some few of his friends were met for divine worship, and carried before sir Richard Brown, a justice of peace, who committed them all to prison, without admitting them to bail. Mr. Biddle was doomed to the dungeon, where he lay for five hours. The recorder, actuated by more reverence for the law, released them on giving security for answering, at the next sessions, to the charge brought against them. They accordingly performed this. But the court not being able to find any statute whereon to form a criminal indictment, they were referred to the following sessions, and then were proceeded against, under pretence of an offence at common law; a mode of conviction which leaves much to the breast of the judge. The decision, in this case, was, that every one of the hearers should be fined in the penalty of twenty pounds, and Mr. Biddle himself in one hundred; and they were ordered to lie in prison till these mulcts were paid.

The sheriff was disposed to have remitted the greatest part of Mr. Biddle's penalty, and to have accepted even ten pounds, which he would have

paid. Sir Richard Brown rigorously insisted upon the payment of the full sum, and even, in that case, threatened him with a seven years imprisonment, which occasioned his continuing in prison.

But in less than five weeks, through the noisomeness of the place, and the want of air, which was peculiarly disagreeable and pernicious to him, whose only recreation and exercise had been, for many years, to walk daily in the fresh air, he contracted a disease which was attended with immediate danger to his life. So unrelenting, so un pitying is bigotry, sir R. Brown could not be moved, in this extremity, to grant the sick prisoner the comfort of a removal, in order to recovery. The sheriff, whose name was Meynel, acted on the principles of humanity, and granted it. But, on the second day after, between five and six o'clock in the morning, the 22d of September, 1662, he died, in the 47th year of his age.

He had formerly assured his friends, that he had brought himself, by frequent meditations on the resurrection and future happiness, to look on death with contempt. The manner with which he met his dissolution, evinced to them the truth of these declarations. For when, by the disease more violently affecting his head, he perceived a great alteration, he signified it to his friends, and
absolutely

absolutely declined any further discourse ; but composed himself, as it were to sleep, for eight hours before he expired, being very sparing of words, and even of groans, that might argue any impatience. When a pious person, who attended him, broke forth into this valedictory wish, *God grant that we may see one another in the kingdom of heaven* ; his speech failing him, he shewed how pleasing that wish was to him, by lifting up his quivering hand. He had, before this illness, frequently dropped expressions, that indicated an expectation of his approaching end ; often saying, that if he should be once more cast into prison, he should never be restored to liberty ; and moreover, *That the work was done*, meaning, that the truth which he apprehended God had raised him up to profess, was sufficiently brought to light, and that there only wanted ingenuoufness in men, for the embracing and acknowledging it.*

* Short account of his life, p. 9.

SECTION XI.

His Works, not noticed before.

IT has been our design, in the preceding sections, to bring into view only those works of Mr. Biddle, which raised the public attention, or drew on himself severe prosecutions. But, besides these, there were other publications of his, which were specimens of his learning and genius, or expressive of his zeal to promote religious inquiry and truth. His juvenile performances have been before mentioned.

During his banishment to the isle of Scilly, as we have said, he drew up an essay to the explaining of the revelations; in which he treated of the beast in the apocalypse, antichrist, the personal reign of Christ on the earth, &c.* His present biographer not having been able to procure a sight of this piece, can say nothing more concerning it.

* Short account of his life, p. 4. and British biography, 8vo. vol. vi. p. 79: note (1) and p. 87.

In the year 1653, Mr. Biddle published several small pieces, which were translations of tracts written by some of the polish unitasians. Among these was one entitled *Brevis discussio*; or a *Brief inquiry touching a better way than is commonly made use of to refute PAPISTS, and reduce PROTESTANTS to a certainty and unity in RELIGION*. The author of this tract was Joachim Stegman, a german, who, on account of his attachment to the socinian sentiments, was dismissed from the pastoral office in two churches of the reformed; on which he went into Poland, and was first chosen principal of the university at Racow, and was then sent, by the synod of Racow, to succeed Valentinus Radecius, as pastor of the unitarian church at Claudiopolis, or, as it is called in German, Clausenburg, in Saxony, where he died in 1633.*

This work was printed in 1633: a translation of it is preserved in the Phoenix. It incurred censure, as containing sundry socinian and pelagian tenets, and was ascribed to Mr. John Hales, of Eton.

“ The scope of it is to shew, that the protestants, by adhering to the peculiar system of Lu-

* Bock Historia antitrinitariorum, tom. i. p. ii. p. 949, 950,
et Sandii Bibliotheca antitrin. p. 132,

ther,

ther, Brentius, Calvin, Beza, &c. &c. had, in many instances, offered weak and improper arguments against popery, which had laid them under needless difficulties. His advice is, therefore, to discard all human authority, and to stick to the scripture only, as explained and understood by right reason, without having any regard to tradition, or the authority of fathers, councils, &c.

“ Mr. Bayle, we are told, says, this book did more hurt than good, not because it was not well written, but because it tended to disparage the reputation of the first reformers, broke in upon their several systems, and, what was worse than all the rest, was manifestly the work of somebody tainted with the heresies of Socinus and Arminius.” *

We suppose that Mr. Bayle speaks here not his own opinion, but the sentiments of those who prefer the party they have once espoused to good sense and truth. The piece opens with this principle; “ He that will refute an error, must neither be entangled in the same, nor reject the true grounds of refutations.” In the succeeding chapters it treats of fathers and doctors; of the holy spirit; of the true opinion touching the judge;

* An historical view of the controversy concerning an intermediate state. 2d ed. p. 64.

of traditions ; of philosophical principles ; of the true opinion touching the rule ; whether the dead do properly live ; whether Christ in heaven hath yet flesh and blood ; whether it be possible to obey the precepts of Christ ; and whether it be necessary to obey the precepts of Christ.

The eighth chapter of this work may be deemed curious, not only for the example it gives of the support which popery derives from some doctrines embraced by protestants ; but for the full and yet concise view which it exhibits of the arguments against an established doctrine, on which few, even in the present day, venture to think with freedom. “ Luther and Calvin,” he observes, “ teach such things as are injuriously defended, not only against the papists, but also against the very life of the christian religion, true piety. Of the former sort, is that opinion wherein they hold that the dead live. It will seem absurd, and indeed the thing itself is very absurd ; yet they believe it.

“ For they suppose that the souls of men, in that very moment wherein they are parted from their bodies by death, are carried either to heaven, and do there feel heavenly joy, and possess all kinds of happiness which God hath promised to his people ; or to hell, and are there tormented, and excruciated with unquenchable fire. And this,

this, as was said before, they attribute to the mere souls separated from the bodies, even before the resurrection of the men themselves, that is to say, while they are yet dead. But these things cannot happen to any thing which is not alive, for that which doth not live, doth not feel; and consequently neither enjoyeth pleasure, nor endureth pain. Wherefore they believe, in effect, that the dead live; namely, in the same manner that they affirm Peter, Paul, and other dead men, to live in heaven.

“ Now this is the foundation, not only of purgatory, but also of that horrible idolatry practised amongst the papists, whilst they invoke the saints that are dead. Take this away, and there will be no place left for the others. To what purpose is the fire of purgatory, if souls separated from the body feel nothing? to what purpose are prayers to the virgin Mary, to Peter, and to Paul, and other dead men, if they can neither hear prayers, nor intercede for you? On the contrary, if you admit this, you cannot easily overthrow the invocation of saints. Now, though the thing be such of itself, as deserves to seem absurd to every one, yet will we see, whether the contrary thereof be not set down in the scripture.

“ Nor need we go far for an example, since we have a pregnant one in the argument of Christ, wherein

wherein he proveth the future resurrection of the dead from thence; that God is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, but is not the God of the dead, but of the living; whence he concludeth that they live to God, that is, shall be recalled to life by God, that he may manifest himself to be their God, or benefactor. This argument would be fallacious, if before the resurrection they felt heavenly joy. For then God would be their God or benefactor, namely, according to their souls, although their body should never rise again.

“ In like manner, the reasoning of the apostle would be fallacious, 1 Cor. xv. 30, 31, 32. wherein he proveth the resurrection by that argument; because, otherwise, those that believe in Christ would in vain seek hazards every hour; in vain suffer so many calamities for Christ, which he teacheth by his own example. Again, because otherwise it would be better to sing the song of the epicureans, “ Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we shall die.” In short, of all men, christians would be the most miserable. Certainly this would be false, if the godly, presently after death, did in their souls enjoy celestial happiness, and the wicked feel torment. For they would not in vain suffer calamities, nor these follow the pleasures,

pleasures of the flesh scotfree. And the godly would be far happier than the wicked.

“ Since, therefore, it is the absurdest thing in the world, to say that Christ and the apostle Paul did not argue rightly; is it not clear that the doctrine is false, which being granted, so great an absurdity would be charged on Christ and the apostle Paul?

“ Farthermore, why should Peter defer the salvation of souls to the last day, 1 Pet. i. 5. *who are kept by the power of God, through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time;* and Paul the crown of righteousness to the day of judgment; 2 Tim. iv. 8. *Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give to me at that day, &c.?* To what purpose should the judgment be appointed? How could it be said of the godly, under the old covenant, that they received not the promise, *God providing some better things for us, that they might not without us be made perfect;* Heb. xi. 40. if the soul of every one presently after death, even without the body, felt celestial happiness?

“ But the very nature of the thing itself refuseth it. Is not living, dying, feeling, hearing, acting, proper to the whole man, or the compound

pound of soul and body? Is not the body the instrument of the soul, without which it cannot perform her functions; as an artist knoweth indeed the art of working, but unless he have instruments at hand, he cannot produce any effect? Let the eye be shut, the soul will not see, though the power of seeing be not taken away from it. For as soon as you shall restore the instruments, a man will presently see. Wherefore souls separated from bodies are neither dead nor live, and consequently enjoy no pleasure, and feel no pain. For those things are proper to the whole compound.

“ But the scripture saith, that the dead are not, that the spirit returneth to him that gave it; and of the spirits of the godly, that they are in the hand of God, but at the resurrection they shall be joined with the bodies; and then, having gotten instruments, they will put forth their operations.”

The translation of this piece of Stegman's is attended with a short preface, in which Mr. Biddle, besides passing encomiums on the work, chiefly labours to obviate an objection that might be urged against it, from the stress it lays on the use of reason in religion. The remarks, which Mr. Biddle offers on this point, are worthy of attention.

Speaking of those who would be displeased with it, because reason is therein much cried up; he says, " My desire therefore is, that such persons would but consider what the holy scripture itself saith on this behalf; namely, how Paul, Rom. xii. 1. calleth the service which christians are to exhibit unto God, a *rational* or *reasonable service*. And Peter, 1 Ep. ii. 2. stileth the word of the gospel which he preached, *sincere rational milk* (for so the original hath it, as any one who is skilled in that tongue, and looketh into the greek context, may perceive). And ch. iii. 15. he saith, *Be ready always to make an apology unto every one that asketh you a reason concerning the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear*. Which passage clearly intimateth, that as there is no incongruity for others to require a *reason* of our hope in Christ, so we christians are, above all other professors whatsoever, obliged to be very *rational*; for to make an apology or defence in the behalf of so abstruse and sublime a doctrine as ours is, requireth a more than ordinary improvement of *reason*.

" This being so, it may seem strange why so great a number even of *protestant* ministers should make *reason* a common theme to disclaim against, giving to it (without warrant of scripture) the name of *corrupt reason* and *carnal reason*, and others the like eulogies. But the truth is, they
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themselves hold many absurd, ridiculous, and *unreasonable* opinions, and so know right well, that if men once begin to make use of their *reason*, and bring the doctrines, that are commonly taught, to the touchstone of the scripture, explained and managed in a rational way, their tenets and reputation with the people will be soon laid in the dust. Let such ministers henceforward either leave off clamouring against *reason*, or no more open their mouths against papists, and their opinion about transubstantiation; for whosoever shall sift the controversy between *papists* and *protestants*, concerning it, shall find that the principal, if not only ground why we reject it, is because it is repugnant to *reason*. But if transubstantiation is to be disclaimed, because contrary to *reason*, why shall not all other *unreasonable* doctrines, upon the same account, be exploded, especially seeing there is scarce any one of them can plead so plausible a colour of scripture for itself as that can?"

Another piece, translated by Mr. Biddle, was Przypcovius's Life of Faustus Socinus; with the preliminary discourse prefixed by that writer to the works of Socinus. The title of the tract is, "*The LIFE of that incomparable man, FAUSTUS SOCINUS SENENSIS, described by a Polonian knight. Whereunto is added, an excellent Discourse which the same author would have had prefixed to the*

works of Socinus; together with a catalogue of *those works*. The views of Mr. Biddle, in this publication, appear to have been truly laudable and liberal, viz. to do justice to a character which had been much aspersed, and to hold up, to contemplation, a great example; at the same time that he enters a caveat against an implicit deference to the judgment of his hero.

“ The life of Socinus, he says in his preface, is here exposed to thy view, that by the perusal thereof thou mayest receive certain information concerning the man, whom ministers and others traduce by custom; having (for the most part) never heard any thing of his conversation, nor seen any of his works; or, if they have, they were either unable or unwilling to make a thorough scrutiny into them, and so no marvel, if they speak evil of him.

“ To say any thing of him here, by way of eulogy, as that he was one of the most pregnant wits that the world hath produced; that none, since the apostles, hath deserved better of our religion, in that the lord Christ hath chiefly made use of his ministry to retrieve so many precious truths of the gospel, which had a long time been hidden from the eyes of men by the artifice of Satan; that he shewed the world a more accurate way to discuss controversies in religion, and to
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fetch out the very marrow of the holy scripture, so that a man may more avail himself by reading his works, than perhaps by perusing all the fathers, together with the writings of more modern authors; that the virtues of his will were not inferior unto those of his understanding, he being every way furnished to the work of the Lord; that he opened the right way to bring christians to the unity of the faith, and acknowledgment of the son of God; that he took the same course to propagate the gospel, that Christ and the apostles had done before him, forsaking his estate and his nearest relations, and undergoing all manner of labours and hazards, to draw men to the knowledge of the truth; that he had no other end of all his undertakings, than the glory of God and Christ, and the salvation of himself and others, it being impossible for calumny itself, with any colour, to asperse him with the least suspicion of worldly interest; that he of all interpreters explaineth the precepts of Christ in the strictest manner, and windeth up the lives of men to the highest strain of holiness; to say the other like things (though in themselves true and certain) would, notwithstanding, here be impertinent, in that it would forestall what the polonian knight hath written on this subject.

“ To him, therefore, I refer thee, desiring thee to read his words without prejudice, and then the works of Socinus himself; and though thou beest not thereby convinced that all which Socinus taught is true, (for neither am I myself of that belief, as having discovered that in some lesser things Socinus, as a man, went awry, however, in the main, he hit the truth) yet for so much of Christ as thou must needs confess appeareth in him, begin to have more favourable thoughts of him and his followers.”

In addition to these pieces, which were translations from polish unitarian writers, we should add another tract by the knight, who was the author of the former,* viz. *Dissertatio de pace, &c. Or, a DISCOURSE touching the PEACE and CONCORD of the CHURCH. Wherein is elegantly and acutely argued, that not so much a bad opinion, as a bad life, excludes a christian out of the kingdom of heaven; and that the things necessary to be known for the attainment of salvation, are very few and easy; and finally, that those who pass amongst us under the name of heretics, are notwithstanding to be tolerated.* This piece, written when the author was little more than eighteen

* For an account of Przypcovius, we refer to the Memoirs of the life, &c. of Faustus Socinus, p. 439—452.

years old, had the honour of being ascribed to Episcopius. The composition is insinuating and masterly. The design of it was liberal, and, considering that the author did not agree, in their discriminating opinion, with those on whose behalf he wrote, it was peculiarly expressive of generosity and candor. His view was to moderate the zeal and bitterness, of which the socinians were, in general, the unmerited objects. To effect this purpose, it was introduced with some reflexions on the lot of truth and innocence in this world. In some following chapters is shewn, what things concerning God and Christ are necessary to be known unto salvation, and what are the parts of true faith; that sincere love towards God and Christ is sufficient to salvation, and that the same may be in those who err; that though faith and the holy spirit be the gifts of God, yet erring persons have and may have them; that nothing but disobedience and unbelief exclude a man from eternal salvation; and that such as err, are free from these; that the things necessary to be known unto salvation are few and very simple, and easy to be understood by the simplest; such is not the common doctrine concerning the trinity; that there is not in this life a perfect knowledge of God, and of divine mysteries, but in the other life; and that faith, hope, and charity are sufficient

cient to salvation. The discussion of these points is followed with a general apology for socinians on this principle, that they are not of such a persuasion out of ambition, avarice, pleasure, or superstition, nor offend out of any malice, but only out of the care of their salvation. Then follows an answer to the objection, drawn from their rejecting the consent of the church, and resting the defence of their opinion upon the authority of scripture only. This is succeeded by an answer to three other objections, with a comparison of Calvin's doctrine on predestination, with the doctrine of others. Then some particular reasons for tolerating heretics are offered; and the question, who are heretics, is considered. The tract concludes with an inquiry, what heretics are to be excommunicated, and what not, and with a fuller apology for those who in that age passed as such.

Mr. Biddle's preface, which is a short one, concludes with that serious and just exhortation, formed on the most enlarged principles, which we have quoted, p. 11 and 12.

Large and numerous quotations from this work might be deemed tedious, and superseded by modern publications on the side of candor and moderation. But a passage or two, it is hoped, will not be unacceptable to the reader. To a prejudice imbibed against the socinian sentiment concerning

cerning the person of Christ, as what must be highly displeasing to him, because derogatory from his glory, the author answers thus: " The greatest part of them, who at this day recede from the common sense of the church in so great a matter, are not out of any rashness so persuaded, touching the son of God, but rather out of a pious fear, lest they should detract from the Father somewhat of his honour. Wherein, if they unwittingly offend against the son, out of love to the Father, (so that improbity mingle not itself with their error) it seemeth very credible, that the son will, for the very love of the Father, forgive them this error. For he gave a notable proof of his meekness, when he prayed for his ignorant murderers. What, think we, will not he do for the love of the Father, who, for the love of men, forgave so great an injury to his enemies? Now if he, out of love to mankind, doubted not to assume the form of a servant, and really to endure extreme disgraces, certainly he will bear with the errors of men, who do not conceive worthily enough of his majesty and dignity, especially that which is past. Will he, who for the sake of men, did, of his own accord, debase himself to the lowest condition, punish them for this very thing, namely, because they out of ignorance, think more meanly of his condition than

than is fit; especially when he himself, by his debasement, did in a manner give an occasion of such ignorance? Certainly it is incredible, that he, who of his own accord underwent, for the sins of men, a reproachful kind of death, will not pardon to human weakness, a simple opinion that derogates something from his ancient excellence, if so be the error be harmless, and be removed from all sin of malice."

Another passage, in which he endeavours to remove the objection against an indulgence to those who held certain opinions, drawn from the fear, that the interest of truth will suffer by the favour shewn to the erroneous, deserves to be quoted. "If," saith he, "we be afraid of the contagion of such errors, either in behalf of ourselves, or rather of the weaker ones, in the first place we may not thereupon renounce brotherly love, which we owe to them, although they err. For we ought not to forsake a certain and clear duty, lest an uncertain evil should happen, nor to pursue even the most holy ends by unlawful means. But, secondly, that fear is vain. For if we have not the truth, there is little danger to be feared from them, much less if we have it. For since they maintain their tenets with no arms, nor with any force, and think it not so much as lawful so to do, nor set them off with any carnal allurements,

ments, certainly the truth can never be by them either oppressed with force, or overthrown with fraud, inasmuch as the nature of truth is such, that, like to eagles feathers, she devoureth all other light plumage of opinions, never withdrawing herself from us, unless she be tired either with our servitude, or sins. Which twain being not to be feared by us in a modest liberty of dissenting, and study of true charity, what cause is there why we should so warily fence our opinions from their tenets?

“ Let us rather be possessed with a certain hope, that as earthen vessels being joined with those of tin or silver, are broken to pieces; so also if God, the author of peace, shall bring back into the church that happy tolerance, all false opinions fighting hand to hand with the true, will be dashed to shivers, and perish. Otherwise, if we so much fear that mutual patience and friendly conference, we do not think well enough concerning the goodness of our cause.

“ Heretofore, when the dawning of gospel-light was returned, Luther and his followers would have wished that they might be tolerated in the communion of the roman church. But it concerned the pope to secure his darkness from the approach of the morning. Again, when a dissension was risen up between the lutherans and
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the reformed, who was it that refused the form of agreement that was offered, but he that doubted of his cause? Now also in the very reformed church itself, upon the dissension concerning fate, none are more displeased with tolerance, than they that suspect the truth of this doctrine. Would error were so circumspect in the cradle of its infancy, as it is provident being once grown up. But it being blind when it is born, doth afterward become sharp-sighted, foreseeing its fate afar off, and eschewing it, and is never more ingenious to prolong its life, than when it is pressed with the conscience of its own weakness."

In aid of the design and reasonings of this tract, Mr. Biddle added a postscript; in which, among other reflexions, are the following pertinent remarks and close appeals to those who, arrogating to themselves the character of the orthodox, censure all others as heretics.

Mr. Biddle granting, that he who contradicts the divine writings of the apostles, should be no less esteemed an heretic, than he who opposed the apostle's preaching by word of mouth, adds; "but even thus can we not challenge that censorian rod against heretics, (referring to certain particular passages in the epistles.) For they whom ye place in the rank of heretics, are so far from contradicting the holy scripture, that they
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wage war against you out of the same, and appeal to the judgment thereof, not without a certain hope of victory, in the examination of their cause, inasmuch as they embrace the scripture in all things, with as great veneration of mind as you do ; nor amongst all the christian churches, which are at this day extant, shall ye shew any one (that I know of) which doth not religiously, and from the heart, yield an undoubted assent to all those things, that are proposed and taught in the holy scripture. Wherefore, there is no cause why ye should condemn any one of them for heresy, since they agree with you in giving due credence to the sacred writ. And, therefore, whatsoever pretence ye seek for your carnal zeal against such as you call heretics, yet to indifferent judgments can no other ground hereof appear, than their dissent from your interpretation of the holy scripture, as to the controverted doctrines.

“ But I will here bountifully grant you, that ye have in all things hit the true sense of the scripture, and defend it. Nevertheless, it is further requisite, that ye make this plain to them, whom ye brand with the crime of heresy. But what here is the stress of your arguments? Ye appeal again to the holy scripture, and from thence condemn heretics. But they have already stricken this weapon out of your hands, shewing

that the holy scripture maketh for you, only in your own sense and interpretation, and that they are accordingly condemned by you, not from the sacred scripture, but from your interpretation of the sacred scripture. And this is the circle of your arguing, which they deservedly reject.

“ Draw out, therefore, against heretics these truly apostolical weapons, not the *thrafonical* prating of the chair in the university, but the power of the holy spirit, wherewith the apostles being indued, could deliver blasphemers to satan, 1 Tim. i. 10. and slay hypocrites with the speaking of a word, Acts v. If ye want the powerful efficacy of this spirit, acknowledge your rashness and iniquity in condemning them, to whom ye are not able, with evident and sufficient arguments to demonstrate your interpretation of the holy scripture, and who by the same right, and from the same foundation, object to you not only errors, but also heresies.

“ Ye know that of Christ, *condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned*. What account will you give to this just judge, for so often violating this precept? Your zeal of the divine glory will not then excuse you; for though it palliate itself under this reverend name, yet is it wholly of the flesh, and odious to God. But if ye affirm, that it proceedeth from the holy spirit, produce arguments

ments worthy of so great an author. For neither is this spirit so weak, but that he can shew forth tokens of his divine authority and presence in his ministers, and by them against his enemies. But whither am I carried away? I beseech thee, good reader, to pardon this digression of mine; and having liked the pious counsel of our author, intreat God that he would instil into other readers also a mind studious of peace and concord."

Such sentiments are so important and liberal, that they can scarcely be repeated too often, or be presented in too various forms. For every representation, whether in a modern or ancient dress, carries a recommendation of them to every candid mind, and it may be presumed, will not be wholly without effect in making them to be known, approved and felt.

SECTION XII.

His Character.

WE have traced Mr. Biddle through the labours, &c. of a studious, and the events of an afflicted life. His studies were devoted to the

pursuit of religious knowledge, and his sufferings were incurred by a conscientious adherence to the convictions which his inquiries produced. From both, the reader will form his own ideas concerning his abilities, learning and character. They were all held in high estimation by those who personally knew him, and were acknowledged by his enemies.

His acquaintance with the holy scriptures, as was observed in the second section, was singularly comprehensive and exact. His knowledge of them was instead of a concordance, for no part could be named, but he would presently cite the book, chapter, and verse. This perfect knowledge in the scriptures, joined with an happy and ready memory, whereby he had, at recollection, what he had read in other authors, gave him a great advantage in all debates, of which, without the least ostentation, he availed himself.

The distinguishing point of view, under which the preceding account exhibits him, is that of a REFORMER, and a sufferer for conscience sake: yet, in the former character, he appears to have been modest and candid, and in the latter patient and resigned. "It was," says his biographer, who appears to have been intimately acquainted with him, "in his heart to promote piety, and he had no design to aggrandise his name by opposition

sition to common doctrines. Indeed, he was a great asserter of common doctrines against novel opinions, that tended either to sedition, libertinism, or superstition. And in what he held contrary to the current, he did not endeavour to tie those he had won, to be of his mind in such a society, and by such a society, and by such bands, as might continue them a successive party, bearing his name as their founder; but left them to all that liberty, which the duty of owning the truth according to their conscience, and of mutual edification, would allow them*."

Zealous and active as Mr. Biddle was in promoting what he deemed great and important truth, he was still more zealous in promoting holiness of life and manners; for this was always his end and design in what he taught. "He valued not his doctrines for speculation, but practice, insomuch that he would not discourse of those points wherein he differed from others, with those that appeared not religious, according to knowledge. Neither could he bear those that dissembled in profession, for worldly interests."

His own life was pure and irreproachable. Mr. Anthony Wood acknowledges, that, "ex-

* Short account of his life, p. 20.

cept his opinions, there was little or nothing blame-worthy in him." He was so free from being questioned for any the least blemish in his life, that one of his advocates says, " the informers themselves, who brought on the last prosecution against him, had been heard to admire his strict exemplary life, full of modesty, sobriety, and forbearance, no ways contentious, touching the great things of the world, but altogether taken up with the great things of God, revealed in the holy scriptures*."

Another writer, on the proceedings against him, gives this testimony to his conversation. " We have," says he, " had intimate knowledge thereof for some years ; but we think he needs not us, but may appeal even to his enemies, for his vindication therein. Let those that knew him at Oxford for the space of seven or eight years, those that knew him at Gloucester about three years, those that knew him at London these eight or nine years, (most of which he hath been a prisoner) speak what they know, of unrighteousness, uncleanness, unpeaceableness, malice, pride, profaneness, drunkenness, or any the like iniquity, which they can accuse him of, or hath

* Short account of his life, p. 10.

he, (as the manner of heretics is) 2 Pet. 2. 3. *through covetousness, with feigned words, made merchandise of any?* Hath he not herein walked upon such true grounds of christian self-denial, that none in the world can stand more clear and blameless herein also? He having shunned to make any of those advantages which are easily made in the world, by men of his parts and breeding, languages, and learning, that (if any known to us) he may truly say as the apostle, *I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel; yea, ye yourselves know, that these hands have ministered to my necessities; he ever accounting it a more blessed thing to give, than to receive*.*"

It is a proof of the great and serious regard which he had for universal righteousness, that "he would often tell his friends, that no religion could benefit a bad man; and call upon them to resolve with themselves, as well to profess and practise the truth that is according to godliness, as to study to find it out, and that against all terrors and allurements to the contrary; being assured that nothing displeasing to almighty God, would be any wise profitable to them†. The probity of his

* CROSBY'S History of the english baptists, vol. i. p. 210, 211, 212.

† Short account of his life, p. 10.

own conduct was eminently conspicuous : so that the appeal was made to many persons of worth and credit in London, on the justice and integrity of his heart, and on his holy care not to dissemble, play the hypocrite, or deal fraudulently with any, not even to save his life *.

The foundation of his moral excellencies was laid, where the foundation of every good attainment must be laid, in the application of the earliest years to the pursuit of divine wisdom. Before he left school, there was discovered in him " a singular piety of mind, and contempt of secular affairs : " he applied himself to the study of virtue, together with the study of literature and science : and, in his younger years, was an amiable example of filial affection to his mother, to whom, becoming a widow by the death of his father, he, with great diligence, gave dutiful assistance †.

The events, which we have surveyed, furnish a striking proof of the perseverance and fortitude, with which he followed truth, and met his sufferings. And, though he was conversant in the discussion of points, involved, by the inventions of men, and a mixture of human science, in great difficulties and obscurity, yet it doth not appear,

* Crosby's history of the english baptists, vol. i. p. 210, 211.

† Short account of his life, p. 4.

that he contended therein out of curiosity, vain-glory, and self-conceit; but with great humility and courtesy: "for they who differed from him, how mean soever, could not oblige him more; than by pertinent objections, soberly urged, to give him the opportunity of resolving them: which he always did with great simplicity and plainness of speech, without any ostentation of learning*."

His conversation was as remote from covetousness, as it was free from ambition. For, when he was capable of doing it, he supported himself by his own industry, and refused the supplies, which benevolence and friendship offered him; unless, when the necessities, brought on by imprisonment, sickness, and the like calamities, constrained him to avail himself of the kindness of others. After a seven years confinement, he was prevailed with to accept of a bed and board from a friendly citizen in London†: and the importunities of another induced him to do the same; after his return from exile in the isle of Scilly. But these were exceptions to his general mode of ministering himself to his wants.

* Short account of his life, p. 10. and Crosby's History of the baptists, vol. i. p. 214.

† Mr. Firmis.

He had learned to be content with a little, and sought not more: nay, out of that little he would contribute to the necessities of others. His gratifications were very moderate, for he was remarkably temperate in eating, as well as in drinking. The purity of his character was not only most fair and unblamable; but, to avoid the least suspicion, he carried his reserve in his behaviour to the female sex, to an unusual (it may be called an extravagant) degree of delicacy and caution.

He was careful to preserve justice in his dealings towards men, and was solicitous to enforce and exemplify this virtue, and that of charity, as, in his opinion, essentially necessary to salvation. And he had such a lively sense of the obligations of humanity and kindness, that it was one of his lessons, which Mr. Firmin learnt of him, not only to relieve, but to visit the sick and poor, as the best means of administering comfort to them, and of gaining an exact knowledge of their circumstances; and as affording an opportunity to assist them by our counsel, or our interest, more effectually than by the charity we do or can bestow upon them *.

There is another ingredient in a good and excellent character, viz. reverent, humble piety,

* The life of Mr. Thomas Firmin, 1698, p. 10. reprinted 1791, p. 8.

which

which deserves particular mention in the delineation of Mr. Biddle's. "The virtues of the devotional kind, observes a great writer, may be shewn by arguments independent of the peculiar doctrines of revelation, to be, in their own nature, the most truly valuable, as well as the most sublime of all others, and to form what may be called the key-stone of every truly great and heroic character †." The piety of Mr. Biddle was eminent. "He was, his biographer tells us, a strict observer himself, and a severe exactor in others, of reverence in speaking of God and Christ, and holy things: so that he would by no means hear their names, or any sentence of holy scripture, used vainly or lightly, much less any foolish talking, or scurrility." While he treated sacred subjects with this reverence and gravity, he would be chearful and pleasant, and like well that the company should be so too. "Yet even in his common converse, he always retained an awe of the divine presence, and was sometimes observed to lift up his hand suddenly; which those that were intimate with him, knew to be an effect of a secret ejaculation. But in his closet devotions, he was wont often to prostrate himself upon the

† Prickeley's Letters to a philosophical unbeliever, part 1, p. 211.

ground, after the manner of our Saviour in his agony, and would commend that posture also to his most intimate friends *."

It is a pertinent remark made on the excellent character, which Mr. Biddle supported, that the unitarians who suffered in our country, were all of them eminent examples of piety and virtue †. It is of consequence, on every occasion that offers, to point out this; not only, as a good example can never be exhibited to view, without doing honour to religion, and leaving some good impressions on the mind;---but also to obviate the prejudices of some, even good men, who can scarcely be induced to suppose that true piety can exist, where, what they deem, great and fundamental errors, are embraced. They have been so accustomed to blend their own peculiar ideas and phraseology, with all their meditations on the divine being, to incorporate them with all their devout addresses to him, that they cannot conceive, how devotion can exist but under such a garb, or piety be felt but with the associations, with which they always feel it. But such persons only prove by this, how limited is their acquaintance with

* Short account of his life, p. 11.

† Mr. Lindsey's Historical view of the state of the unitarian doctrine, p. 303.

human characters, and how narrow are their own views of things. The principles which are the great grounds of devout affections, are common to all religious schemes : such as that *God is, and that he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him : that he hath given us eternal life, and that this life is in, or by, his son Christ Jesus.* Into these principles may, and must, all the sentiments and exercises of a pious mind be resolved, as their just cause and animating motive. To a benevolent mind it is a source of joyful reflection to believe, that the power and pleasure of these principles are, and must be, felt by every sincere christian, whether calvinist or arminian; whether athanasian, arian, or socinian. The lover of truth, especially of religious truth, cannot but possess a serious and devout mind : for he is conversant with the most serious subjects, and from them only can derive his support and consolation under the discouragements and evils to which his inquiries after truth may expose him. And if trinitarians can mention a Howe, a Baxter, and a Watts; anti-trinitarians can boast an Emlyn, an Abernethy, and a Lardner.

SECTION XIII.

Conclusion—Some general reflections on Mr. Biddle's character—and on the utility of religious controversy.

SOME will be ready to hold the labours and character of Mr. Biddle, which we have represented, in low estimation: as distinguished chiefly by an excessive attachment to religious controversy. But the neglect or indifference, with which they themselves treat the discussion of theological questions, is not a fair and just standard by which to judge of those whose attention, like Mr. Biddle's, hath been directed to them: for how can they be supposed competent to the determination of a point, on which they have bestowed no pains? All that their opinion of its value proves, is only that such a direction of the thoughts and studies does not suit their taste. But still, in the great circle of human actions and pursuits, it may have its peculiar importance and use.

It will not be denied, that the discovery of truth, mathematical or philosophical, is a suitable and valuable employment of the rational powers: and though it be not necessary for the good of the world, that every man should be a philosopher or
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mathematician, yet mankind are greatly indebted to the labours, and ought to hold in high esteem the names, of those who have devoted their time and thoughts to such investigations : which, in innumerable instances, are capable of being improved, and have been actually improved, to the advantage of mankind.

Why should its due value and praise be denied to the investigation of religious truth ? This hath a more extensive influence, than scientific : it hath a more intimate connexion with human conduct, in all the intercourse, and with human felicity, under all the events of life. This derives a peculiar importance, from the energy it possesseth, to form a moral character ; to meliorate the whole human race in this world ; and to train up individuals, who yield to its power, for eternal **PERFECTION** and happiness.

The revelation of religious truth, first by Moses and the prophets, and then by Jesus Christ, is a most striking and convincing argument of its value and importance. Being revealed from heaven, it becomes an object of sacred attention to all, to whom it hath been communicated. There is a merit in the improvement of any talent, in the fulfilling of any obligation. On these plain principles, the investigation of religious truth hath merit :—the merit of attending to what

God hath imparted. Diligence and assiduity heighten this merit ; but sufferings endured in the pursuit and profession of it, add still more to it. Probity and integrity are inestimable in any course of life. Can they lose their value because the principle, which calls them into exertion, is the love of divine truth ?

Let these considerations be weighed ; they will assist us to appreciate the excellence and importance of such characters as Mr. Biddle. Such characters have been rendered peculiarly necessary and useful, through the gross corruptions, in which christianity hath been, for ages, almost lost. Without such exertions, such studies, and such sufferings, as mark the life of Mr. Biddle, no reformation from popery could have taken place, could have been supported and carried on. A Biddle, as hath been seen, calls the attention to important questions, throws light by discussion on interesting points, and awakens the spirit of inquiry and zeal.

In aid of these remarks, I am induced to produce the following reflexions. “ Notwithstanding the disrespect which is occasionally shewn towards religious controversy, by little and illiberal minds, it is to such controversies as engaged the pens of Clarke, Hoadley and Sykes, that we owe much of what is most valuable and dear to us.

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An affected disparagement of the several controversies which have respected religious liberty, and the improved knowledge of the scriptures, generally indicates an indifference to the nature and obligations of religion itself, or bespeaks a total ignorance of the blessings we derive and enjoy from free inquiry and debate, by means of the press; or is the effect of a lamentable prejudice against every desire and attempt to bring all professing christians to abide by the plain and artless gospel of Christ; or, when such aversion to controversy is held by well-meaning and more candid minds, it is no other than their declaring their earnest desire to establish the *end*, while, at the same time, they inconsistently and peremptorily protest against the only *means* which can effect it*."

The sentiments of the learned bishop Pearce are very pertinent here, and deserve to be recited. "Let it be further considered," says his lordship, "that, if no disputes had ever been raised in the christian church, there is great reason to think, that less of truth would have been preserved

* See the very instructive and entertaining Memoirs of the life and writings of Dr. Arthur Ashley Sykes, by Dr. Disney, p. 365.

in it, than there is to be found at present. Cicero tells us (Tusc. Disput. l. ii. cap. 2.) that philosophy would not have arrived at that height of credit, to which it arrived in Greece, if it had not received force and vigour from the controversies and disputes which were there carried on among the learned. And so it fares with religion: however good men may justly dislike the methods by which disputes about religious points are too often carried on, yet we see, that, in fact, ignorance of religion is no where so gross as where free debates about it are *not* allowed. And it is observable of the earlier and better ages of the church, that when heretics arose, and carried some doctrines to one extreme, it commonly was when the church seemed inclined to bear too much towards the other extreme. These heretics then, under the guidance of providence, caused a *revulsion of humours*, as it were, in the ecclesiastical body: it brought many back again into the right channel, and made them stick more closely to the truth than they would probably have done, if no opposition had been made. So that disputes about the christian religion seem to have contributed as much to the preserving it *pure*, as the constant motion of waters does to the keeping them *sweet*: and if so, that can be no argument *against believing*

living christianity, which has been one great cause of continuing it worthy to be believed.*

After all, it is perhaps more accurate to describe Mr. Biddle, after his biographer, as a *sincere reformer*, than a controversialist: for, besides publishing but a few books, he did not reply to those diverse answers, which were given to what he did publish. For this conduct several reasons have been given. "First, that he was verily persuaded, that truth being in itself plain and simple, especially what is necessary and very useful, is easy to be apprehended by few words: it is error that seeks garnish in many words and figures of speech. Again, what he did publish, he well deliberated of; so that he did not find in the adverse writings any thing of moment, which an attentive reader might not perceive already obviated; and they that attend not to the first propositions, will not receive benefit by replies and rejoinders. We add, that he, treading in a path, long overgrown with briars and thorns of error and sophistry, it required vastly greater labour and diligence to find out the way of truth, in which no Englishman had, by any appearing footsteps, gone before him for many ages†."

* Bp. Pearce's Sermons, vol. 1. p. 386, 387.

† Short account of his life, p. 9, 10.

To those who are convinced that, notwithstanding his mistakes in some points, Mr. Biddle had truth on his side in the great questions he discussed, concerning the unity of God, and the humanity of Christ, it will be a painful reflexion, that his opinions have made but a very slow progress during these hundred and twenty years: at least the first hundred years of this period. The progress of truth is ever slow: for it has great difficulties to encounter from the indolence and interests of mankind; the discovery of it is attended with a painful process: light must be let into the minds of men by degrees: and many arguments must be, one after another, laid before them; and presented in different forms, and repeatedly renewed, before prejudices are subdued and conviction is produced. But to every sincere lover of God's truth this is a pleasing and encouraging thought: that it is GREAT, and WILL IN THE END PREVAIL.

In the mean time, it is the duty of every one to use his own best and faithful endeavours to come at the knowledge of it, and to promote it. "Let him," to use the words of the prelate just quoted, "be indifferent, if he will, to the knowledge of the several curious sciences, with which men of leisure wisely enough fill up the intervals of their time. Let him slight, if he will (though
I com-

I commend him not for it), the account of what history records concerning the past ages of the world, or what travellers or voyagers say concerning the distant parts of the earth. In all these things, his indifference, though not *praise-worthy*, is not *criminal*, is not *dangerous* to the health of his soul. But, when the question is, “How shall we worship God aright,” (it may be as justly said, when it concerns the *object* of our worship) “How shall we please him? Upon what terms will he receive penitent sinners into favour?—Can it be wisdom? can it be common sense, not to make a diligent and impartial inquiry?—No man who finds his mind entangled with doubts and difficulties can be justified, if he neglect, as Pilate did, to know what the TRUTH is. It is his duty to search: it is his interest to do it; for the safety of his soul is highly concerned in it*.”

* Ut supra, p. 388, 389.

T H E E N D.



THE LIFE
OF
MR. THOMAS FIRMIN,
LATE CITIZEN OF LONDON.

WRITTEN BY ONE OF HIS MOST INTIMATE ACQUAINTANCE.

WITH
A SERMON,
ON
LUKE X. 36, 37.
PREACHED ON THE OCCASION OF HIS DEATH.

LONDON:

PRINTED MDCCXCI.

[Re-printed from the edition of 1698.]

THE
L I F E
OF
MR. THOMAS FIRMIN.

THE long acquaintance and intimate friendship I had with Mr. FIRMIN, are (I confess) warrantable causes, that so many do expect from me, an account of his (memorable) life. If some other man would answer the public expectation, with more address, as to expression, method, number and value of observations and reflections; in a word, more elegantly; yet I will not be wanting in sincerity or truth.

THOMAS FIRMIN was born at Ipswich in Suffolk, in the month of June, anno 1632, being the son of Henry Firmin, and of Prudence his wife, Henry and Prudence, as they did not overflow with wealth of the world, so neither was their condition low or strait. God gave them the wish of Solomon, *neither poverty nor riches*; but that middle estate and rank, which containeth all that is valuable and desirable in wealth, without the parade, vanity and temptations, that (generally)

adhere to riches. But these two were very considerable in their degree, or place, both as to esteem and plenty; by means of their sobriety, diligence and good conduct, the effects of their piety, they were of the number of those, who were then called "Puritans," by the looser sort of people: who were wont to impute precisianism, or affected puritanism, to such as were more devout, and withal more conscientious, and exemplary, than is ordinary; though in the way of the church of England.

When he was of capable years for it, they put their son (Thomas Firmin) to an apprenticeship in London; under a master who was (by sect or opinion) an arminian, a hearer of Mr. John Goodwyn. Our young man, accompanying his master to the elegant and learned sermons of Mr. Goodwyn, soon exchanged the (harsh) opinions of Calvin, in which he had been educated, for those (more honourable to God, and more accountable to the human reason) of Arminius and the remonstrants. And now it was, that he learned, as was the commendable custom of those times, to write short hand; at which he was so dextrous, that he would take into a book, any sermon that he heard, word for word, as it was spoken by the preacher; if the sermon were not delivered with too much precipitance. Of this he made a double use, both then, and in the very busiest part of his

his life. For, if the sermon was considerable, for (judicious) morality, or weighty arguments, he often read it, in his short-hand notes, for his own further improvement : and then took the pains to write it out (in words at length) for the benefit of his acquaintance. He left behind him a great many little books of that kind ; sermons copied fair from his short-hand notes, which, not seldom, are “ multum in parvo.”

As to his demeanor in his apprenticeship ; he was so nimble in his motions, in taking down, opening goods to chapmen, &c. that some gave him the name of “ Spirit.” And in making his bargain, his words and address were so pleasing, and respectful, that after some time, the customers rather chose to deal with Thomas, than with the master of the shop : or if a bargain was struck between a customer and his master, he would decide the difference to the liking of both.

He met, however, with one rub, in the course of his service ; for the elder apprentice purloined five pounds of his master's money, and laid it to the charge of Tom. Firmin. I know not whether the imputation was believed, probably it was not ; but it pleased God himself to judge in this case. For the elder servant was, shortly after, taken with a mortal sickness ; and, before he died, made confession, that he took and spent his master's money, Thomas Firmin not being in the least privy to it. Thus he that made all things,

the very least, does not disdain or neglect to judge all things, even little things, in the properest time. Many crimes are suffered to rest, or are not presently called to judgment: because the delay of justice ordinarily hurts no body; but, when the innocent and virtuous lie under imputations, by occasion of the guilt of others, the detection of offenders, and the execution of wrath, are but seldom (if ever) respited.

So soon as he was made free, he began to trade for himself, though his first stock was but about one hundred pounds. By the opinion he had raised of himself among the merchants and others, and the love he had gained among his master's customers, the neighbourhood, and a great number of incidental acquaintance, he overcame the difficulties of so weak and incompetent a beginning; so that in the year 1660, he married a citizen's daughter, with five hundred pounds to her portion.

From his first setting up (as they speak) for himself, he would be acquainted with all persons that seemed to be worthy, foreigners as well as english, more especially ministers: he seldom dined without some such at his table; which, though somewhat chargeable to his (then) slender abilities, was of great use to him afterwards, both in relation to the poor and the public. For out of his large acquaintance and multitude of friends, he engaged the (powerful) interest of some, and the (weighty) purses of others, in some of those
great

great designs of charity, or other services to the public, for which I shall hereafter account.

Now also it was, that he happened to become acquainted with Mr. Biddle, who much confirmed him in his arminian tenets, and carried him a great deal further. Mr. Biddle persuaded him, that the unity of God is a unity of *person* as well as of *nature*; that the holy spirit* is indeed a *person*, but not *God*. He had a great and just esteem of Mr. Biddle's piety, exemplariness and learning; and is that friend (mentioned in Mr. Biddle's life) who gave Mr. Biddle his bed and board, till he was sent prisoner by protector Oliver Cromwell to the isle of Scilly; and when there, Mr. Firmin, with another friend, procured for him a yearly pension of one hundred crowns from the protector, besides what he obtained from other friends, or gave himself.

Mr. Firmin's diversion, in this part of his life, was gardening; for which purpose he cultivated a piece of ground at Hoxton, not a mile from London; where he raised flowers, and (in time) attained no small skill in the art of gardening, in the culture of flowers, herbs, greens, and fruit-trees of all sorts. I have often borne him company to his garden; but, either going or coming back, he used often to visit the poor and sick.

* [The personality of the holy spirit is renounced by unitarian christians; and by *the spirit of God*, is very generally understood, *the power of God*, or God himself.]

It was one of Mr. Biddle's lessons, that it is a duty not only to relieve; but to visit the sick and poor; because they are hereby encouraged and comforted, and we informed of what nature and degree their straits are, and that some are more worthy of assistance than others; and their condition being known, sometimes we are able to assist them by our counsel, or our interest, much more effectually than by the charity we do, or can bestow upon, them.

Before I pass to the next scene of Mr. Firmin's life, I am obliged to take notice, that by his first wife he had a son and a daughter; the former lived to man's estate, but died (a bachelor) about seven years before his father. The mother of these two children died while Mr. Firmin was (occasionally) at Cambridge, managing there some affairs of his trade. Her death was accompanied with this remarkable circumstance. Mr. Firmin dreamed at Cambridge, that he saw his wife breathing her last: whereupon, early in the morning, he took horse for London; but, on the way thither, he met the messenger who was sent to give him notice of her decease.

Another (necessary) remark belonging to this part of his life is, that though hitherto his wealth was no more than a competence, considering his liberal humour, and the multitude of his acquaintance; yet he was even then a most kind brother, uncle, and kinsman. The reader may take account
of

of this in the following transcript, being the copy of a paper written by one of his nearest relations, and who hath lived with him above thirty years, and was (a great part of that time) his partner, and also a person of great sobriety, diligence, integrity and prudence. “ He had many
 “ relations, of several degrees, who stood in need
 “ of his care and help; to whom he was a very
 “ kind brother, uncle, and kinsman; besides the
 “ great pains he took to promote them, as it lay
 “ in his way or power. His loss by some of them,
 “ for whom he advanced money, and his disburse-
 “ ments for others of them, amounted to very
 “ considerable sums; a good part of which was
 “ not long after his first beginning in the world.
 “ This was the greater prejudice to him, be-
 “ cause then his own circumstances required
 “ money to carry on his trade with ease and
 “ advantage; for he had then more occasion
 “ for his money, than when he was arrived to a
 “ very considerable estate, which he did not till
 “ about seventeen years before his death. His
 “ estate at (about) seventeen years before his
 “ decease, was *three times greater than when he*
 “ *died*, though then considerable. He might
 “ easily have increased it, as much as he dimi-
 “ nished it, had he set his heart on riches; but
 “ those he never valued in comparison of doing
 “ good: and I have often heard him say, *he would*
 “ *not die worth more than five thousand pounds.*”

: Of his liberalities to the poor, and the deserving, and the motives to them, I may say enough hereafter. But for his beneficence to his kindred, it proceeded not merely from the benignity of his nature, or natural affection; which (however) to cherish and improve is a great virtue; but from his reverence to the christian religion. For as he would frequently say, that passage of St. Paul to Timothy is to be read as it stands in the margin of our bibles, "He that provides not for his own KINDRED, is worse than an infidel:" so he was wont to give that text as the reason of his bounties to his relations. So far was he from that deism, of which some have been so over-forward to suspect him.

During the imprisonment of Mr. Biddle in the isle of Scilly, Mr. Firmin was settled in Lombard-street, where first Mr. Jacob, then Dr. Outram, was minister: with these two, being excellent preachers, and learned men, he maintained a respectful and kind friendship; which was answered as affectionately and cordially on their parts. Now also he grew into intimacy with Dr. Whichcote, Dr. Worthington, Dr. Wilkins, Mr. Tillotson: Dr. Wilkins was afterwards bishop of Chester, Mr. Tillotson (for he was not yet made doctor) archbishop of Canterbury; but in their dignity, and to the very last, Mr. Firmin had the same place and degree in their esteem and friendship, that

that at any time formerly he had. While Dr. Tillotson preached the Tuesday's lecture at St. Lawrence, (so much frequented by all the divines of the town, and by a great many persons of quality and distinction) when the doctor was obliged to be at Canterbury, where he was dean, or was out of town, either for diversion or health, he generally left it to Mr. Firmin to provide preachers for his lecture, and Mr. Firmin never failed to supply his place with some very eminent preacher; so that there never was any complaint on the account of Dr. Tillotson's absence. And this Mr. Firmin could easily do, for now there was hardly a divine of note (whether in London, or, in the country, that frequented London) but Mr. Firmin was become acquainted with him. This helped him much to serve the interests of many (hopeful) young preachers and scholars; candidates for lectures, schools, cures, or rectories; for whom he would solicit with as much affection and diligence as other men do for their sons, or near relations.

See here a trader, (who knew no latin or greek, no logic or philosophy) compassed about by an incredible number of learned friends, who differed so widely in opinion from him, and were continually attacking him for his (supposed) errors; yet could they never remove him from the belief of the UNITY OF GOD, nor did their importunities,
or

or his resistance, break off (or so much as lessen) the friendship between them; certain arguments of the extraordinary wit and good address of our friend.

Her late majesty (queen Mary) of most happy memory, having heard much of Mr. Firmin's usefulness in all public designs, especially those of charity; and that he was heterodox in the articles of the trinity, the divinity of our saviour, and the satisfaction; she spoke to archbishop Tillotson, and earnestly recommended it to him, to set Mr. Firmin right in those weighty and necessary points. The archbishop answered, that he had often endeavoured it; but Mr. Firmin having so early and long imbibed the socinian doctrine, was not now capable of a contrary impression. However, his grace published his sermons (formerly preached at St. Lawrence's) concerning those questions, and sent Mr. Firmin one of the first copies from the press. Mr. Firmin, not convinced by his grace's reasonings, or his arguments from holy scripture, caused a very respectful answer (although some have stretched one expression too far), entitled, *Considerations on the explications and defences of the doctrine of the trinity*, to be drawn up and published, himself giving to his grace a copy of it*. I

* [See third volume of *Unitarian tracts*, 4to. 1694.]

must not omit to do the archbishop justice against those who pretend, that the archbishop, notwithstanding those sermons, was in his heart an unitarian. For Mr. Firmin himself told me, shortly after the archbishop had published those sermons, that going to Lambeth, and the archbishop happening to dine in private, he sent for Mr. Firmin to him, and said to this effect, " that the calumnies of people had obliged him to publish his sermons, some time since preached at St. Lawrence's against the tenets of Socinus ; that he had sincerely preached as he then thought, and continued still to think, of those points ; that, however, nobody's false imputations should provoke him to give ill language to persons who dissented conscientiously, and for weighty reasons. That he knew well this was the case of the Socinians, for whose learning and dexterity he should always have a respect, as well as for their sincerity and exemplariness." Afterwards, when Mr. Firmin gave him a copy of *The Considerations* ; after he had read it, he only said, " My lord of Sarum shall humble your writers." Nor did he afterwards, at any time, express the least coldness on the account of the answer made to him, but used Mr. Firmin as formerly, inquiring, as he was wont, "*How does my son Giles?*" for so he called Mr. Firmin's son, by his second wife.

About the time the (great and good) archbishop died, the controversy concerning the trinity, and the depending questions, received an unexpected turn. The unitarians took notice, from D. Petavius, Dr. R. Cudworth, S. Curcellæus, the Oxford heads, Dr. S——th and others, that their opposers agreed indeed in contending for a trinity of divine persons, but differed from one another, even as much as from the unitarians, concerning what is to be meant by the term *persons*. Some of them say, three divine *persons* are three (eternal, infinite) *minds, spirits, substances* and *beings*; but others reject this as heresy, blasphemy, and tritheism. These latter affirm, that GOD is *one* (infinite, eternal, all-perfect) *mind and spirit*; and the trinity of *persons* is the godhead, divine essence, or divine substance, considered as *unbegotten, begotten, and proceeding*; which *modes* or *properties* they (further) explain by *original wisdom*, unbegotten, and therefore named “the father;” the *reflex wisdom*, logos, or WORD, which being generated or begotten, is called “the son;” and the eternal spiration of *divine love*, that has therefore the name of “holy spirit.” The *unitarians* never intended to oppose any other trinity, but a trinity of (infinite) *minds* or *spirits*; grant to them, that GOD is one infinite spirit or mind, not two or three, they demand no more. They applied them-

selves,

selves, therefore, to inquire, which of these trinities, a trinity of *spirits* or of *properties*, is the doctrine of the catholic church. They could not miss of a ready satisfaction. All systems, catechisms, books of controversy, councils, writers that have been esteemed catholic, more especially since the (general) Lateran council, anno 1215, and the reformation, have defined GOD to be *one infinite all-perfect spirit*; and the divine *persons* to be nothing else, but the divine essence or *god-head*, with the three *relative properties*, unbegotten, and begotten, and proceeding. They saw, therefore, plainly, that the difference between the church and the unitarians had arisen from a mere mistake of one another's meaning: a mistake occasioned (chiefly) by the unscriptural terms *trinity*, *persons*, and such like. They resolved, that it became them, as good christians, to seek the peace of the catholic church, and not to litigate about terms (though never so improper, or implying only trifles,) when the things intended by those terms are not unsound or heterodox. These (honest, pacific) inclinations of men, who had no design in their dissent from the church, gave birth to "*The agreement between the unitarians and the catholic church*;" a book written at the instance (chiefly) of Mr. Firmin, in answer to Mr. Edwards, the bishops of Worcester, Sarum, and Chichester, and monsieur de Luzanzy. I

need not to say, what will be owned by every (ingenuous) learned person, without hesitation, that *The Agreement* is as well the doctrine of the catholic church, as of the unitarians; and that in all the points, so long and fiercely debated and controverted by the writers of this and former ages. It must be confessed, the hands of a great many excellent persons did concur to this re-union of parties, that seemed so widely and unreconcilably divided, and did encourage the author of *The Agreement* in his (disinterested, laborious) searches into antiquity, and other parts of learning; and several learned men, some of them authors in the socinian (or unitarian) way, examined the work with the candour and ingenuity that are as necessary, in such cases, as learning or judgment are. Mr. Firmin published it, when examined and corrected, with more satisfaction than he had before given in different controversial writings. I did not wonder, however, that our friend was so ready to embrace a reconciliation with the church: for he was ever a lover of peace, and always *conformed as far as he could*, according to that direction of the apostle, *Whereunto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule.* Which with the best interpreters he understood thus: “ Conform to the doctrines, terms and usages, “ that are commonly received, as far as you can; “ if, in some things, you differ from the church, “ yet

“ yet agree with her, and walk by her rule, to
 “ the utmost that in conscience you may ; or, as
 “ the apostle himself words it, *so far as* (or where-
 “ unto) *you have attained.*” From this prin-
 ciple it was, that our friend never approved of
 those who separate from the communion of the
 church on the account of ceremonies, habits, form
 government, or other mere circumstantial of re-
 ligion. He was wont to tell such, that seeing it
 was undeniable they might communicate with the
 church without either sin or scandal, and did com-
 municate on some occasions ; it is therefore both
 scandal and sin to separate and divide. With this
 he silenced many, and reclaimed divers*.

In the year 1658, the unitarians were banished
 out of Poland ; the occasion was this : Poland had
 been long harassed with most dangerous civil and
 foreign wars, infomuch that at one time there
 were in arms in Poland, Lithuania, and the Ukrain,
 one hundred and fourscore thousand Poles, as many

* [This argument for conformity will not, in the most distant
 degree, apply to those who, believing the proper unity of God,
 shall continue to join in giving religious worship to Jesus Christ,
 the creature of God ; or to a trinity of Gods. A practice highly
 reprehensible upon every principle of religion and morals ; and
 which, it may reasonably be supposed Mr. Firmin himself
 would have viewed in the same light, had the subject been pre-
 viously discussed, as in our day, or had his temper and habits
 admitted him to think for himself in this respect.]

Tartars, and two hundred thousand Cossacks, besides powerful bodies of Austrians, and Transilvians, who attacked Poland on the west and south. The ravages and desolations committed, and caused, by so many great armies, in a country that has but few fortified places, were inexpressible. Poland, therefore, was reduced to such a feeble and desperate condition, that their king withdrew himself; and the king of Sweden took the advantage of their confusion and low estate, to invade them with forty thousand men, regular troops. He took the cities of Warsaw and Craeow, and with them almost all Poland: he constrained the Poles to take an oath of subjection and allegiance to him; which oath was first submitted unto, and taken, by the roman catholics, then by the protestants, and, not till last of all, by the unitarians. But the swedish king engaging himself in other wars, particularly with Denmark, and in Germany, John Casimire, king of Poland, appeared again; and the Poles generally joining their king, at length drove the Swedes out of Poland: the swedish king found himself obliged to condescend to a (reasonable) peace with king Casimire. As the unitarians were the last that submitted to the obedience of Swedeland, so being bound thereto by an oath, they did not concur with the other Poles in rebelling against him. They considered the swedish king as a fair conqueror, and a protestant

testant prince, and themselves as tied to him by
 oath; therefore, they even opposed, in some places,
 the revolt from him. This was interpreted a
 desertion of their natural prince, and native coun-
 try; and (though all the partakers, with the swedish
 king, were included in the peace made with him)
 was avenged in the very next diet after the peace,
 by a decree and edict, the sum of which was as
 follows: " The toleration granted by the laws;
 " and coronation-oaths of the kings, to dissenters
 " from the church, does not legally extend to the
 " unitarians (whom they called arians, or ana-
 " baptists), this being a new heresy, since the
 " granting that indulgence or toleration; there-
 " fore all unitarians, who within such a limited
 " time will not embrace the roman-catholic reli-
 " gion, shall be banished out of Poland; allow-
 " ing, however, two years (in effect but one) to
 " sell their estates, whether real or personal."
 Hereupon, the unitarians left Poland, and settled,
 some in Transilvania, where divers provinces and
 cities are unitarian; some in ducal Prussia, and
 Brandenburg, where they enjoy like privileges
 with his electoral highness's other subjects; some
 (few) in Holland. These unitarians were (in
 my opinion) unhappy, that they had not a man
 among them who could discern it, and shew them;
 that neither in the article of the trinity, nor of
 the divinity of our saviour, they had any *real* dif-
 ference

ference with the catholic church: and that the terms used by the church, imply nothing that is contrary to the unity of God, as it is held by learned men. Their confession, which they published upon their banishment, ascribes as much to our saviour, as is intended by the catholic terms *incarnation, God-man, God the son, hypostatical* (or personal) *union*, and the rest: therefore, seeing the church will not dismiss those (unscriptural) terms, but (for certain reasons) contents herself to interpret them to a sound sense, it had been well if the polish unitarians had been so dextrous, as to distinguish between an unsound sense, and improper terms; disclaiming only the former, and submitting to the latter*. The unitarian congregations in Poland had many poor persons; therefore the nobility and gentry prayed a contribution for them, from all unitarian churches of foreign parts: and though they knew there were but few unitarian families in England, they sent a letter to us to intreat our help. Mr. Firmin procured for them some assistances from private persons; and, though without a brief, some collections in churches: both these in the year 1662. But I

* [Mr. Firmin's biographer appears to have fallen into the casuistry of Mr. Firmin himself on the subject of conformity; which we cannot but greatly disapprove, however we may value his principles of integrity in other respects.]

mention this for the sake of what happened anno 1681, for then king Charles granted a brief for another sort of polonian sufferers, protestants also: these were they who had suffered the unitarians to be banished about twenty years before, when it was in their power to have prevented it, if so much as one of their deputies had protested against it in the diet. They willingly permitted, nay, they promoted, the violation of the liberty of dissenters not twenty years before; and now, weakened by the loss of the whole unitarian interest, it came to their own turns to be the sufferers. They had never lost either country, or liberty, if they had not voted themselves out of both, by their (former) votes against the unitarians. A toleration or liberty of religion, once violated, will soon be disregarded; for break it only in one instance, or party, and you have disannulled the whole reason of it, and all the pleas for it. The malice of any against the English unitarians comes now too late; they less dissent from the church (if they are at all dissenters) than any other denomination of dissenters*: therefore let those dissenters look to it, who have promoted

* [This argument is founded upon the presumption that the church of England is unitarian; but the inconsistency in her doctrines, and the difference between the liberty she claims, and that which she allows, justifies the plea of the unitarian dissenter beyond the possibility of refutation.]

a bill, in name and pretext, against immorality, and blasphemy; in truth and real design against the unitarians. I said king Charles granted a brief for the polonian protestants, who had assisted in banishing the polonian unitarians—This brief Mr. Firmin promoted as much as in him lay: I find he received of nine dissenting congregations, 110l. 16s. 10d. and in another book I find the sum of 568l. 16s. 0½d. collected on the same account.

We are now come to another part of Mr. Firmin's life, his second marriage. In the year 1664 he married a daughter of a justice of peace in the county of Essex, and had with her, besides all the qualifications of a good wife, a considerable portion. God was pleased to give them several children; but one son, Giles Firmin, lived to man's estate. He promised to become an eminent merchant, his father giving him the whole portion he had received with his mother: and the young gentleman going into Portugal, to manage there his own business, he was called by the heavenly father to eternal mercies.

In the year 1665 was a great plague, of which there died in that one year, in London only, near one hundred thousand persons: most of the wealthier citizens removed themselves and children into the country; so did Mr. Firmin, but left a kinsman in his house, with order to relieve some
poor

poor weekly, and to give out stuff to employ them in making such commodities as they were wont. He foresaw that he should be hard put to it, to dispose of such an abundance of commodities as these poor people would work off, in so long time, for him only: but when he returned to London, a wealthy chapman (who was greatly pleased with his adventurous charity) bought an extraordinary quantity of those goods; so that he incurred no loss, at that time, by employing the poor.

The year after the sickness, happened the great fire, by which the city of London sustained the damage of ten millions of pounds sterling. Mr. Firmin, with his neighbours, suffered the loss of his house in Lombard-street, and took (thereupon) a house and warehouse in Leadenhall-street. But now his fine spirit, and generous way of trading, were so well known, that in a few years he so improved his stock, that he rebuilt his house, and built also the whole court (excepting two or three houses) in which he lived. And having now provided sufficiently for himself and family, he began to consider the poor.

His first service to them, or rather to God in their persons, was the building a warehouse by the water-side, for the laying up corn and coals, to be sold to the poor, in scarce and dear times, at moderate and reasonable rates, at the rates they had been purchased, allowing only for loss (if any should

should happen) by damage of the goods while kept.

He went on with his trade in Lombard-street till the year 1676, at which time I estimate he was worth about nine thousand pounds. If we consider, that this estate was raised from a beginning of about one hundred pounds, in an ordinary way of trade, and in about twenty years time; to what a mighty wealth would it have grown, in the hands of such a manager, in his remaining twenty or one and twenty years; had not his native liberality, great mind and zeal of serving the divine majesty, turned his endeavours a contrary way; to support, and to raise others, while he lessened and impaired himself? For in this year he erected his warehouse in Little Britain, for the employment of the poor in the linen manufacture. Let us hear what archbishop Tillotson (then but dean Tillotson) says of this design of Mr. Firmin, in his funeral-sermon on Mr. Gouge, anno 1681.

“ He (Mr. Gouge) set the poor of St. Sepulchre’s parish (where he was minister) to work,
 “ at his own charge. He bought flax and hemp
 “ for them to spin; when spun, he paid them for
 “ their work, and caused it to be wrought into
 “ cloth, which he sold as he could, himself
 “ bearing the whole loss. This was a very wise
 “ and well-chosen way of charity; and in the
 “ good effect of it, a much greater charity, than
 “ if

“ if he had given to those very persons (freely
 “ and for nothing) so much as he made them to
 “ earn by their work : because, by this means he
 “ rescued them from two most dangerous tempta-
 “ tions, idleness and poverty. This course, so
 “ happily devised and begun by Mr. Gouge, gave,
 “ it may be, the first hint to that useful and wor-
 “ thy citizen, Mr. Thomas Firmin, of a much
 “ larger design ; which has been managed by
 “ him some years, in this city, with such vigour
 “ and good success, that many hundreds of poor
 “ children, and others, who lived idle before,
 “ unprofitable both to themselves and the public,
 “ now maintain themselves, and are also some
 “ advantage to the community. By the assistance
 “ and charity of many excellent and well-disposed
 “ persons, Mr. Firmin is enabled to bear the un-
 “ avoidable loss and charge of so vast an under-
 “ taking ; and by his own forward inclination to
 “ charity, and unwearied diligence and activity,
 “ is fitted to sustain and go through the incredible,
 “ pains of it.” (Sermon on Mr. Gouge, p. 62,
 63, 64.)

It is of this project and warehouse that Mr.
 Firmin himself speaks, in a book of his, entitled,
Proposals for the employment of the poor, in these
 words : “ It is now above four years since I set
 “ up my workhouse in Little Britain, for the
 “ employment of the poor, in the linen manu-

“ *factory* ; which hath afforded so great help and
 “ *relief* to many hundreds of poor families, that
 “ *I never did, and I fear never shall do, an action*
 “ *more to my own satisfaction, or to the good*
 “ *and benefit of the poor.*” He employed, in this
 manufacture, sometimes sixteen hundred, some-
 times seventeen hundred spinners, besides dressers
 of flax, weavers, and others.

Because he found that his poor must work six-
 teen hours in the day to earn sixpence, and thought
 that their necessities and labour were not suffici-
 ently supplied, or recompensed, by those earnings ;
 therefore, he was wont to distribute charity among
 them, as he saw their need, especially at Christ-
 mas, and in hard weather. Without this charity,
 some of them would have perished for want, when
 either they or their children fell ill. He used also
 to lay in vast quantities of coals, which he gave
 out by a peck at a time : whoever of the spinners
 brought in two pounds of yarn, might take away
 with them a peck of coals, besides what coals
 were given to such as were ancient, had many
 children, or any sick in their family. But, because
 they soiled themselves by carrying away coals in
 their aprons or skirts, he obviated that inconve-
 nience, and damage to them, by giving them can-
 vass bags. Cleanliness contributing much to health,
 he distributed among them shirts and shifts made of
 the coarser and stronger sort of cloth, that had been
 spun

spin by themselves, and he gave the same also among their children. Much of this linen he begged for them ; for he found, among his acquaintance and friends, divers charitable persons, who would rather buy the cloth that had been wrought by our home-poor, than purchase it, though at somewhat cheaper rates, from merchants or shops, that sell scarce any except foreign cloth. By the assistance and order of his friends, he gave to men, women, and children, sometimes three thousand shirts and shifts in two years. But still further to encourage and help his poor, he would invite persons of ability to come to his workhouse, on days the spinners brought their yarn, that, seeing their poverty and diligence, he might the more easily persuade them to give, or subscribe, something for their relief. Some would work, but knew not the art of spinning, or were not able to purchase wheels and reels ; for these he hired teachers, and freely gave them their reels and wheels. He often took up poor children as they were begging in the streets, whom he caused to be taught at his own charge, and provided for them their reels and wheels, which were never deducted out of their work.

In his book of *proposals* he takes notice that, “ In
“ above four thousand pounds laid out the last year,
“ reckoning house-rent, servants’ wages, loss by
“ learners, with the interest of the money, there

“was not above two hundred pounds lost. One chief reason of which was, the kindness of several persons, who took off good quantities of commodities at the price they cost me to spin and weave : and, in particular, the East India and Guinea companies gave me encouragement to make their *Allabas* cloths, and coarse canvas for pepper bags ; which before they bought from foreign countries.”

He published that book of *proposals* to engage others to set the poor to work, at a public charge ; or at least to assist him, and two or three friends, in what he had now carried on, for above five years, at the loss of above one thousand pounds. But, finding that the lord mayor and the aldermen were not persuaded by what he had offered in his book, and by discourse with them, and other wealthy citizens, he began to lessen the spinning trade : for I find that in the year 1682, the whole disbursement was only two thousand three hundred and thirty-seven pounds three shillings, and yet the loss thereby that year was two hundred and fourteen pounds.

It should seem he did not meet with so many charitable persons, who would buy his manufacture at the price it cost him, as in some former years.—Nay, from this time the loss increased yearly upon him. For seven or eight years together he lost two-pence in the shilling, by all the work of his poor ; but he

was

was contented, for he would say, *Two-pence given them by loss in their work, was twice so much saved to the public, in that it took them off from beggary or theft.* But his loss some years was extraordinary. In the year 1683, the trade increasing again, his own disbursements, besides his friends, were not less than two thousand pounds; the loss for that year was four hundred pounds. Continuing thus, in the year 1684, the balance of loss, not then received, amounted to seven hundred and sixty-three pounds. And in the year 1685 it increased to eight hundred pounds eleven shillings and three-pence; toward which loss, an eminent citizen, who had five hundred pounds in that stock, quitted the whole principal, and required no interest. In the years 1686, 1687, 1688, and 1689, the trade declined for want of more such benefactors. The loss now remaining was four hundred and thirteen pounds, eleven shillings and three-pence; the value of the goods then in hand, and debts standing out being computed at three hundred and seventy-two pounds three shillings and one penny, I find no more in the whole received than two hundred and seventy-nine pounds and one penny, which falling short ninety-three pounds three shillings, added to the former loss of four hundred and thirteen pounds eleven shillings and three-pence, makes five hundred and six pounds fourteen shillings and three-pence. This whole sum I find not any way made

good, but remains due to Mr. Firmin, though never reckoned by him as any part of his estate.

Anno 1690. The design was taken up by *the patentees of the linen manufacture*; who made the poor, and others, whom they employed, to work cheaper; yet that was not sufficient to encourage them to continue the manufacture. The patentees agreed with Mr. Firmin, to give him one hundred pounds a year to oversee and govern their manufacture: but seeing their undertaking had not answered their, or his, expectations, he never received the promised salary, nor discounted it to them; and if he had, he would certainly have given it (in money, linen, and coals) among the spinners. This I venture to say, because when he drew some prizes in one of Mr. Neal's lotteries to the value of one hundred and eighty pounds, he reserved to himself only the money he had adventured: the money gained, he gave partly to some relations, and partly to the poor.

But the poor spinners, being thus deserted, Mr. Firmin returned to them again, and managed that trade as he was wont: but so, that he made it bear almost its own charges. But in order that their smaller wages might be comfortable to them, he was more charitable to them in his distributions, in this than in any former years; and begged for them of almost all persons of rank, with whom he had intimacy, or so much as friendship.

He

He would also carry his cloth to divers persons, with whom he scarce had any acquaintance; telling them, "it was the poor's cloth, which in conscience they ought to buy at the price it could be afforded:" If the buyers were very wealthy, he prevailed on them to give some of the cloth they had bought, in shirting; and he would quickly send for the money, that was due for the cloth. But, without these ways, it had been impossible for him, to imploy such a multitude of people, who could not stay a minute for their money. This continued to be his chief business and care, to the day of his death: saving that about two years since, when the calling in the clipped money occasioned such a scarcity of current coin, that it was hard with many rich to get money enough to go to market, he was forced to dismiss some of his spinners, for mere want of money to pay them. I heard his partner and kinsman, Mr. James, tell him, that he had taken about seven hundred pounds out of their cash already, for the spinners; and that he should take out no more, as yet. Not that Mr. James was not always an encourager and promoter of the work-house charity; for he never took any interest-money, for his share in that stock: but, their whole common trade going through the hands of Mr. James, and being managed by him, he was more sensible than Mr. Firmin, that more ready money could not

not be spared to that use, without great disadvantage to their trade.

Flax and tow being goods very combustible, Mr. Firmin was always a little uneasy, lest by some accident, the work-house, being in the keeping only of servants, should take fire: and I remember the boys, in one of their licentious times of throwing squibs, flung one into the work-house cellar, where the tow and flax were stowed; but providence did not permit it should do any hurt.

Before I dismiss this work-house, I must take notice, that at his death, our friend told Dr. L. that he did not regret his dying, only he could have been willing (had God so pleased) to have continued two months longer, to put his work-house and spinners into another method. That method is now settled by Mr. James; and the poor spinners employed as formerly.

Concerning this work-house, and the spinners, Mr. Firmin would often say, that, *To pay or relieve the spinners, with money begged for them, with coals, and shirting, was to him such a pleasure, as magnificent buildings, pleasant walks, well cultivated orchards and gardens, the jollity of music and wine, or the charms of love or study, are to others.* I am persuaded he said no more than the truth; for Mr. James, who was his apprentice, journeyman, and partner, upwards
of

of thirty years, gives this account of his uncle's expence on this and other charities ; " Comparing
 " and balancing, says he, his expences and losses with
 " his gains, he might have left an estate behind him
 " of at least twenty thousand pounds, if he had not
 " given and spent it in public and private charities,
 " buildings, and other good works ; whereas now
 " his estate amounts to no more than a sixth part of
 " that sum." But it was his settled resolution not
 to be richer : he told me, but a little before he died,
 that were he now worth forty thousand pounds, he
 would die but very little richer than he then
 was. I inclined to think that in such case, he would
 have died much poorer ; for such a sum would
 have engaged him in such vast designs for
 his province, the poor, that (probably) he would
 have gone beyond the expence he intended at
 first for them. I have heard his physician blame
 him sometimes, that he did not allow himself com-
 petent time for his dinner ; but hastened to Gar-
 raway's coffee-house, about his affairs. But those
 affairs were seldom, if ever, his own ; he was to
 solicit for the poor, or in the business of some
 friend who wanted Mr. Firmin's interest : or he
 was to meet on some design relating to the pub-
 lic good. In these matters his friends, that were
 not quick in their dispatches, had reason oftentimes
 to complain of him, as not giving them sufficient
 time, to dispatch business with him : for he was
 nimble

able above most men, in apprehension, in speech, judgment, resolution, and action.

He was persuaded by some to make trial of the woolen manufacture; because at this, the poor might make better wages, than at linen work. For this, he took a house in Artillery Lane: but the price of wool advancing very much, and the London spinsters being almost wholly unskilful at drawing a woolen-thread, after a considerable loss by them, and twenty-nine months' trial, he gave up the project.

He laboured with a particular zeal and activity, in redeeming poor debtors out of prison; not only as it was charity to the persons, but out of regard to their (in the mean time) distressed and starved families: he would say, the release of one man out of prison, is a relief bestowed on his whole family. I have sure grounds to believe, that it was himself of whom he spake, in his book of *Proposals*, p. 83. *I knew one man, who, in a few years last past, with the charity of some worthy persons, has delivered some hundreds of poor people out of prison; who lay there, either only for jailor's fees, or for very small debts: I have reason to believe that many more have been delivered by others; and yet one shall find the prisons very full of prisoners at this time.*

As he discharged great numbers of prisoners, he took care for the better and easier subsistence
of:

of others, while in prison : for he would examine the prisoners, concerning their usage by their keepers ; and sometimes prosecuted jailors, before the judges, for extorting unlawful fees, and other exorbitant practices. I remember, one of the jailors prosecuted by Mr. Firmin, made a rope, and hanged himself before the matter was determined : a strong presumption, that he was conscious to himself, of great faultiness, and a demonstrative proof, of the great need of such prosecutions, and of the virtue of him that undertook them.

He continued these endeavours for poor debtors, from before the year 1681 to his last breath : but being grieved, that he could do nothing for debtors, confined for great sums ; therefore, on behalf of such he always vigorously promoted acts of grace by parliament, whereby insolvent debtors were discharged. Tho' he never was a parliament man, he had mighty interest in both houses ; and was the cause that many bills were quashed, and others passed : insomuch, that once, when an act of grace for poor prisoners, that was liable to have, and had, an ill use made of it by unconscionable or knavish people, passed the houses and royal assent ; he was upbraided with it by some of the creditors, and told that it was his act.

Mr. Firmin was not insensible, that sometimes people come into prisons, or otherwise become poor,

poor, more by their own negligence, idleness, riot, and pride, than by mishap and misadventure ; yet he could not join with those, who say here-upon, *they hate the poor ; and that such well deserve the straits, and miseries, that they bring on themselves.* He was wont to answer, to such reasonings, that ; *It would be a miserable world : indeed, if the divine providence should act by that rule : if God should shew no favour, grant no help, or deliverance to us, in these straits or calamities, that are the effects of our sins. If the universal Lord seeks to reclaim, and to better us, by favours, and graces ; do we dare to argue against the example set by him ; and against a method, without which, no man living may ask any thing of God ?*

There is no place whatsoever, but of necessity it must have divers poor, more especially London : where every house having one or more servants, who are obliged to spend their whole wages in clothes ; when these servants marry, every little mishap in the world reduces them to beggary ; their small, or rather no, beginnings are crushed by every accident. Mr. Firmin had so full a sense of this, that (in some years of his life) he begged about five hundred pounds a year ; which he distributed to the poor, at their houses, or at his own, by the sums of two shillings and six-pence, or five shillings, or ten shillings, or fifteen shillings, as he saw

law (or was well informed of) the necessities of the persons. The way he took for the better effecting this charitable distribution, was; he would inquire of the most noted persons for honesty and charity, in the several parishes, who were the most necessitous and best deserving poor in that neighbourhood: he went then to their houses, that he might judge farther, by their meagre looks, number of children, sorry furniture, and other circumstances, in what proportion it might be fit to assist them. He always took their names and numbers into a book; and sent a copy of so much of his book, to the persons who had intrusted him with their charity, as answered to the money trusted to him by every such person: that if he so minded, he might make inquiry, by himself or any other, concerning the truth of the account given in. But Mr. Firmin's fidelity grew to be so well known, that after a few years, many of his contributors would not receive his accounts. I know a certain person, whose hand was with Mr. Firmin in all his charities; I should not exceed (I believe) if I said, that in twenty-one years time he hath given by Mr. Firmin's hand, or at his recommendation, five or six thousand pounds: this person hath himself told me, that Mr. Firmin was wont to bring him the accounts of his disbursements, till he was even weary of them, and (because he was so well assured of him) he desired him not to bring

him any more. Sometimes the sums brought, or sent in, to Mr. Firmin, for the poor, were such, as did enable him to spare some part to some whom he knew to be charitably disposed like himself: in that case he would send small sums, such as forty shillings, or three pounds, sometimes more, to those of his acquaintance, which sums they were to divide among the poor of their vicinage; whose names and case those friends were to return to him. He hath sent to me, and divers others that I know of, many such sums, in christmas time, in hard weather, and times of scarcity.

In these distributions, Mr. Firmin sometimes considered others, besides the mere poor; particularly the poorer sort of ministers: I doubt not he hath made use of many hands besides mine; but by me he hath sent, (of his own proper motion) divers times the sum of forty shillings, sometimes two guineas, to ministers who were good preachers and exemplary, but whose vicarage, curacy, or lecture was small. I have known that he has sent no less than ten pounds to a clergyman in debt, or oppressed with many children, when he hath been well assured, that the person was a man of probity and merit. He asked me once concerning Mr. P. of Gr. Ch. what sort of man he was? I answered; his mind was much above his purse; he was charitable, curious, learned; a father among young scholars, who were promising men; but

but his living not above eighty or ninety pounds a year. Mr. Firmin said, *I have done considerably for that man.* I answered as I thought myself obliged, *you may take it on my word that your liberality was never better placed.* Afterwards I met the widow of Mr. P. in London; I desired her to accept half a pint of wine at the next tavern. While we were together, I asked her whether there had not been some acquaintance between her husband and Mr. Firmin. She said, the acquaintance was not much; but the friendship great. She said her husband was acquainted with many persons of quality, that he had experienced their liberality through the whole course of his life: because his address, as well as his merit, was so remarkable. She said, that of so many benefactors to Mr. P. Mr. Firmin had done most for him both in life and death. When her husband died, his estate would not pay his debts; she was advised hereupon, by a clergyman, to propose a composition with the creditors: seeing that every one could not be fully paid, yet all of them might receive part of their debt. She consulted Mr. Firmin, by letter, about this; he approved the advice, and was one of the first that subscribed the composition: but withal, sent her a letter, wherein he remitted his whole debt; and desired to see her, when her affair was cleared, and she at quiet. When she came to him, he said, *he had missed in*

his aim, in what he had designed to procure for her, but he would do something himself. Shortly after, he sent her a good Norwich stuff, that very well clothed her and her four children. She told me this, with many tears; to which I had the more regard, because I had long known her to be a virtuous, and a very prudent woman.

As Mr. Firmin's pains, and care, in giving forth these charities, were not small, so neither were they little, in procuring them: not only because many persons are hardly persuaded to give the bread of themselves and families to others; but because it is much more difficult to beg for others, than to give ones self. He that begs for others, must be master of a great deal of prudence, as well as wit, and address: he must know, how to choose the *Mellia tempora fandi*, the fittest opportunity of speaking; and when he speaks, he must apply himself to those passions of the person, by which only he can be wrought on. I remember Mr. Firmin told me, of his applying to a citizen of the highest rank, for his charity in rebuilding St. Thomas's Hospital; of whom he demanded no less than one hundred pounds. The person had been some way disobliged by the governors of that hospital; so he refused to subscribe any thing: but our friend seeing him one day among some friends whom he respected, and by whom he was willing to be respected; and that also he was in a very good

good humour, he pushed on his request for the hospital, and prevailed with him so far as to subscribe the whole one hundred pounds. But to his personal solicitations, he was forced sometimes to add letters ; and sometimes succeeded by the arguments in his letters, better than by the authority of his personal mediation. I find in one of his books, in the year 1679, the sum of five hundred and twenty pounds six shillings, received of seventy-two persons ; in a book of the year 1681, the sum of five hundred and thirty-one pounds nineteen shillings and six-pence, received of forty-three persons. All these were to be treated with privately, and opportunely, which required much time, caution, industry, and discretion ; and which, laid out on his own business, what great effects would it have produced ? Mr. Firmin might, much more easily, have been one of the great men of the world, than almoner general, for the poor and hospitals. I observe in the same book of 1681, that the disbursements against the sum of five hundred and thirty-one pounds nineteen shillings and six-pence, do amount to five hundred and ninety-four pounds fifteen shillings and eleven pence ; the balance overpaid is sixty-two pounds fifteen shillings and five-pence ; which over-paid balance is to be found in many of his accounts, and I believe it came out of his own purse. I must note also, that the sums were not given for the

poor alone, or for the spinners alone ; but of fifty pounds given, thirty pounds of it is for the spinners, and twenty pounds for the poor ; sometimes twenty for the spinners, and thirty for the poor : elsewhere, one hundred pounds is given, fifty for the poor, and fifty for the spinners ; another gives fifty pounds for cloth, to be divided to the poor ; another one hundred pounds for the same use.

Mr. Firmin having set his heart so much on charity, could not but esteem and love Mr. Gouge, a man of the same spirit : whom while he was in London, he got to table with him. It is not to be doubted, that it was the intimate friendship of these two persons, that gave occasion to that (remarkable) passage in Dr. Tillotson's funeral-sermon on Mr. Gouge, p. 82. " Mr. Gouge was
 " of a disposition ready to embrace and oblige all
 " men ; allowing others to differ from him, even
 " in opinions that were very dear to him. Pro-
 " vided, men did but *fear God and work righte-*
 " *ously*, he loved them heartily, how distant so-
 " ever from him in judgment about less-necessary
 " things, in which he is worthy to be propounded
 " as an example to men of all persuasions." And
 till the example is followed, the world will never
 have peace.

That great preacher has given us an account of Mr. Gouge's religious charity, in printing divers good books in the Welch and English tongues,

to

to be given to those that were poor, and sold to such as could buy them. The chief of those prints, and the most expensive, was an edition of the bible and liturgy in the Welch tongue; no fewer than eight thousand copies of this work were printed together. One cannot question that Mr. Firmin contributed to, and procured, divers sums for this excellent undertaking of his friend; though all is attributed to Mr. Gouge, who was chief in that great and good work. After Mr. Gouge's death I find the sum of 419l. 9s. given to buy a number of those bibles; whereof Dr. Tillotson, (then Dean of St. Paul's) gave 50l. Mr. Morrice, 67l. other persons the rest: but there wants in the receipts 26l. 13s. to balance the disbursement, and that I judge was Mr. Firmin's money. Now that we are speaking of *books*, I ought not to forget, that Mr. Firmin often printed ten thousand copies of the *Scripture catechism*, which some think was written by Dr. Worthington; but I have cause to believe that the author was Dr. Fowler, now bishop of Gloucester; who in compiling it, followed the method of Dr. Worthington. These Mr. Firmin gave to his spinners and their children, and to the children of the hospital; engaging them to get it by heart, and giving something to those that did. He lodged also great numbers of them with booksellers, at cheaper rates than they were

were printed, that they might be sold also cheaply, and thereby, be dispersed all over England. His acquaintance might, at all times, have of them what numbers they would, *gratis*. He valued this catechism, because it is wholly in the words of scripture, favours no particular party or persuasion, and therefore is of general use : the aim of the judicious author being to instruct the young and the ignorant, in what *all parties agree* is necessary to be believed, and done ; leaving it to others to engage them in controversies and debates.

In the year 1680, and 1681, came over the French protestants ; these afforded new work for Mr. Firmin's charity and zeal : for of all the objects of charity, he thought those the most deserving, who were undone for conscience toward God ; whether such conscience be a well-informed conscience, or an erroneous and mistaken one. It is not the truth or falsehood of the opinion, but the zeal for God, and the sincerity to the dictates of conscience, that makes the martyr. Therefore now our eleemosinary general had to beg, not only for the spinners, the poor of the out parishes of London, the redemption of debtors from prison, for coals and shirting ; but for a vast number of religious refugees, whose wants required not only a great, but an immediate, succour. The first, and one of the most difficult cares for them, was, how to provide lodgings for
such

such multitudes, in a city where lodgings are as costly as diet? But Mr. Firmin bethought him of the *Pest-house*, then empty of patients: the motion was approved by the lord mayor and court of aldermen; and some hundreds of these strangers were accommodated in that spacious and convenient place. As for relief in money, they made their first application to the French church: therefore I find in Mr. Firmin's books, *Delivered to the deacons of the French church*, 50l. to J. S. 10l. to an old man at Ipswich 20l. This was immediately upon their coming over. In 1681, and 1682, I find the sum of 2363l. 10s. 1d. issued forth, for the use of the French, through his hands; and in 1683, for the French children at Ware, 443l. 18s. 9d. For their meeting-house at Rye, 20l. I find upon his books these following sums, before a *brief* was granted to them, 100l. then 155l. in the next page 70l. 15s. To answer these receipts, the books say, Sept. 15. *Delivered to Mr. Carbonel, &c. in 16 pieces of cloth*, 50l. Sept. 24. *To the deacons of the Savoy, in cloth*, 20l. Oct. 7. *To Carbonel, &c. in thirty-two pieces of cloth*, 100l. 14s. The balance is 27l. 8s. which (it is likely) was his own money.

In the year 1682, he set up a linen manufacture for the French at Ipswich, to which himself gave 100l. which was all sunk in their service, saving that at last he received 8l. 2s. 6d. He paid also
for

for their meeting-house at Ipswich 13l. In the same year also he disbursed for them for coals 60l. 10s. whereof he received only 20l. 10s. There have been four briefs granted to the French, one by king Charles in 1681; a second by king James in 1686; another by king James in 1687; the fourth by king William in 1693. Besides which king William gave to them 1000l. per month, for thirty-nine months. It was Mr. Firmin that was chiefly concerned in the distribution of all this money; especially of the thirty-nine thousand pounds, which was committed to two bishops, two knights, and a gentleman; but almost the whole distribution was left to Mr. Firmin, sometimes *with*, but more commonly *without* their inspection. I see I have omitted, before I was aware, the following sums, paid to the French protestants at Ipswich, before their brief was collected; 45l. 10s. and 42l. and 45l. 9s. another 42l. to twenty-one families at Ipswich.

He had a principal hand in the special collections, that are now made every winter, about Christmas time, in churches, for the poor in and about London. He was the man that solicited the king's letter for making those collections. He took care of printing and distributing the king's and bishop of London's letters to the several rectors, and other ministers, of churches in London, to be by them read in their respective churches.

He

He waited on the lords of the treasury for the king's part of that charity. And when the money, as well of the king as the parishes, was collected, and paid into the chamber of London, and was then to be divided, among the poor of the several parishes, by my lords the bishop and mayor of London, no man could so well proportion their dividends as Mr. Firmin. This was well known to their lordships, who, therefore, seldom made any alteration in his distributions. In these matters, all the churchwardens made their applications to Mr. Firmin; and, when the dividend was settled, received their warrants from him: for which purpose, the bishop of London would many times intrust him with blanks, and the lord mayor was always ready to give his hand. The whole of this charity was so constantly, and so many years, managed by Mr. Firmin, that, he dying some days before Christmas last, the king's letter, for the collection, was not given till the 12th of January: and when the collection was brought in from the several parishes, they were at a loss for the distribution, and were glad to take direction from Mr. Firmin's pattern.

There hath been occasion, in my last section, to mention the bishop of London, Dr. Henry Compton. I ought not to omit, that Mr. Firmin could never speak of this bishop, without a particular respect and deference. He admired the candour,

dour, moderation, wisdom, and dexterity, accompanied and tempered by caution and vigour, which (said he often) are so eminent in his lordship, and so constantly appear, upon all occasions proper to any of those virtues, that I wish it were as easy to be like, as it is impossible not to esteem him. I return to Mr. Firmin.

During the last twenty-three or twenty-four years of his life, he was one of the governors of Christ-church hospital in London. It is known to every body almost, in London, that Mr. Firmin procured a great number, and very considerable donations to this hospital; but I cannot specify many particulars, because he kept not exact accounts of them; but those that have come to my knowledge, are remarkable. Give me leave to give the reader this account of one of them. The honourable sir Robert Clayton, having had it in his thoughts to make a provision for a mathematical master in that hospital, became the happy proposer, and (by his interest in the then lord treasurer Clifford, and sir Robert Howard) the successful procurer of the establishment of a mathematical school in that hospital, for the constant breeding of the number of forty boys, skilled in the Latin tongue, to a perfect knowledge in the art of navigation. The occasion was this. There was 7000*l.* given to this hospital, by a citizen, (payable out of Weavers-hall) for the main-

maintenance of forty boys. Upon the restoration, the fund, out of which this issued, reverting to the crown, king Charles the second, upon the said proposal and petition to that purpose, was graciously pleased to grant to the hospital the said 7000*l.* to be paid them by 1000*l.* per annum for seven years ; upon which the hospital was obliged to maintain the said forty boys, successively to be so educated for ever. Sir Robert Clayton, being greatly pleased that he had been an instrument in so charitable and beneficial a constitution, did afterwards meditate a donation from himself to this hospital, and so to take it into his special care and beneficence. And that which instigated him to these thoughts, was, he had laboured under a very grievous sickness, even to despair of recovery ; but it pleased the almighty governor that he did recover ; and Mr. Firmin was very instrumental in it, both by his personal ministry, and giving quick notices to physicians of several symptoms. Hereupon sir Robert advised with Mr. Firmin about the building and adding a ward for girls to this hospital, as a testimony of his gratitude to God ; and determined that Mr. Firmin should have the management of that affair. Accordingly he went about it, you may be sure, with great alacrity and diligence ; but at whose charge he erected this large building was a secret, not known to any of the family but John Morris, esq;

fir Robert's partner in this work also; and perhaps to my lady. In this was laid out near 4000*l*. but it was not yet finished, when upon occasion of the unhappy difference between the passive-obedience men and the law-obedience men, the former, having the power on their side, turned the latter both out of the government of the city and of that hospital, among whom fir Robert (though eminent) was ejected, together with his faithful agent and friend Mr. Firmin, another governor, as I have said. Then it was that Mr. Firmin broke silence, and upbraided those excluding governors with depriving the hospital of such a benefactor as the builder of that ward. For fir Robert was now alone, Mr. Morris being deceased, and having left him the residue of his estate. Mr. Firmin also built a ward for the sick, to prevent infecting the healthy and sound; if the small-pox, or other contagious distemper, should happen among the children, as it often doth. This ward cost 426*l*. 4*s*. besides 6*l*. 5*s*. for a press; but the gentleman that gave the money for both, would not then be known; and continues still of the same mind. I find, however, an account in Mr. Firmin's books of 1,537*l*. (the sick ward included) received, and laid out, by Mr. Firmin: and another account of 704*l*. 10*d*. received, with the names of the persons who gave it, and the uses for which it was given. In the
year

year of our lord 1675, our friend built two houses for the two beadles, or other officers, of the hospital, at his own charge; of which I have a certificate, under the clerk's hand, in these words:

“ At his own proper cost and charges, Mr. Firmin set up a clock and dial, for the use of the hospital, at the top of the north-end of the great hall. The said Mr. Firmin built two new brick houses in the town-ditch; one at the south-west end, the other at the north-east, to be disposed to such officers, as the government of the hospital should think fit. Farther, at his own cost and charge, a shed, or little room, at the east-end of the late bowling-alley; and a new brick wall. He repaired all the walls, and levelled the ground.”

At the charge of a friend of his, a citizen, he laid leaden pipes to convey the water to the several offices of the hospital; and bought them a large cistern; which in all cost about 200*l*. These were great conveniences to the house, for the orphans, (who before fetched up the water they used on their backs, which agreed not well with their strength,) kept the house foul, and prejudiced their clothes. Out of town he built a school, with all conveniences to it, for the hospital children; this he set up at Hertford, where many of the hospital children are boarded: the school cost 544*l*. 13*s*. of which he received, by the charity

of ten persons, the sum of 488l. the balance is 56l. 13s. which lies upon himself for any thing that appears. He was wont every lord's-day, at five in the evening, to see the orphans of the hospital at their evening service; at which time they prayed, and sung an anthem by select voices, the chorus by all the boys. After this, they sat down to supper, at the several tables, under the care of their matrons; here Mr. Firmin viewed them in their provisions, and in the behaviour both of them and their officers and attendants, commending, or admonishing, as there was occasion. To this sight he invited, one time or other, all his friends, whether of the town or country; and at last led them to the orphans' box, into which they would put somewhat, more or less, as they were charitably disposed. A countryman was very remarkable: for having seen the order and method of the hospital, when he came home, he made his will, and gave very considerably to the place. I was once with our friend at the hospital, when looking over the children's supper, which was pudding-pies, he took notice of a pie that seemed not of due bigness; he took it immediately into the kitchen, and weighed it himself; but it proved down-weight.

These cares did not so wholly employ this active man, but that he was also a great and good commonwealth's-man. He was always mindful of those

those who suffered for conscience, or for asserting the rights and liberties of the nation: and he printed a great many sheets, and some books, of that tendency and nature; great numbers of which he himself dispersed. When king James commanded the reading his declaration (for toleration and indulgence in religion) in the churches; a great number of well-written pamphlets were printed and dispersed, to convince people of the bad design of that specious declaration: Mr. Firmin was a principal encourager and promoter of those prints, which cost him considerable sums, as well for their publication as otherwise. He furthered, as much as in him lay, the heroical attempt of the prince of Orange, to rescue this nation from slavery and popery: and since his majesty has been seated on the throne, our friend has been particularly diligent in promoting the manufacture of the Lustre-company; because it is highly beneficial to this nation, and as prejudicial to our (then) enemy. He had the greatest hand, and used the most effectual endeavours, for procuring acts of parliament, and rules of court, in that behalf.

He and Mr. Renew took great pains, and were at much expence, to prevent correspondence with France, and the importation of silks, and other commodities, from thence. For this, they ran the hazard of their lives, from the revenge of mer-

chants and others, whom they prosecuted to execution. A merchant was so desperately angry at his detection, and the great damage he should unavoidably sustain thereby, that he went into a room alone, in a tavern, and ended his life by shooting himself in the head. The agents of Mr. Renew and Mr. Firmin gave either the first, or very early intelligence of the French invasion; which was to have been followed by the assassination of the king.

But he was not more a friend to the liberties of the nation, and to the present establishment, than he was an enemy to licentiousness. He was, from the first, a member of *The society for the reformation of manners*; he contributed to it by his advice, assistance, solicitations, as much as his leisure from the cares and endeavours (before mentioned and exemplified) would permit him: but his purse was always with them. He had such a zeal against needless swearing, whereby the religion of an oath grows vile and contemptible, and false-swearing becomes almost as common as idle and unnecessary swearing, to the indelible scandal of the christian name, and the great danger (even as far as life and estate) of particular persons: I say his zeal against common needless swearing, in what form soever, was so great, that in coffee-houses, or other places, where he overheard such swearing, he would immediately challenge the forfeiture
(appointed

(appointed by law) for the use of the poor; so that, in companies where he was frequent, an oath was seldom heard. But he raised the forfeiture according to the quality of the person; if a nobleman, or other person of distinction, or a clergyman, swore, they came not off at the ordinary forfeiture, appointed in the law, it was doubled or trebled upon them; especially if any such were very common swearers, or their oaths of a profane or impious sort. If any person refused to pay the forfeiture required, our friend would tell them, the forfeiture was to the poor, whose collector and steward he was: if still they refused to pay, their punishment (he told them) was, to be set down, by him, in the list of his *incorrigible swearers*; and that, for the future, he would not own them as his acquaintance, or speak to them as such. Divers noble persons would not endure this last; but would immediately condescend to pay the forfeiture, or promise payment, which he seldom remitted; particularly if they were often in that fault. As for himself, I never heard an oath from him in forty-four years (almost daily) conversation with him; though his temper was naturally quick and warm, and he had often great provocations to anger, one of the principal causes of rash and intemperate swearing.

But let us return to Mr. Firmin's charities. Nobody can have forgotten the great number of
Irish

Irish nobility, clergy, gentry, and others of all qualities, and both sexes, who fled into England from the persecution and proscriptions of king James. A brief was granted to them, of which Mr. Firmin was one of the commissioners; but, besides that, the ministers, churchwardens, and collectors, of every parish in England, were to give account, by letter, to Mr. Firmin, what sums they had collected, and paid to the archdeacons. Therefore, on many post-days, several hundred letters came to his hand, for a long time: and many of the collected sums were sent to him, and by him paid into the chamber of London: the money given by the king and queen was wholly, in a manner, solicited and received by him. The numbers and necessities of these refugees required a second brief: the sum total (paid to these two briefs) that went through Mr. Firmin's hands, was fifty-six thousand five hundred sixty-six pounds, seven shillings, and sixpence. The distribution of the money, gathered on these briefs, was by a certain number of the commissioners; but Mr. Firmin was the most constant man at their meetings: sometimes he attended the distribution from morning to night, without intermission for food. But, besides the sums paid into the chamber, and distributed as aforesaid, I am assured our friend solicited, and gave many private sums to particular persons, whose quality made them ashamed to

to take of the common stock, or whose necessities required more than (without giving offence) could be allowed out of it. When by the mercy of God, and the magnanimity of the king, Ireland was reduced; and the protestants might now return to their houses, employs, and estates, Mr. Firmin doubled his industry and diligence to furnish them for their journey; because thereby he not only served them, but eased the nation, especially the better (that is, the charitable) part of it. He obtained great sums for this purpose; sir Thomas Cook (to whom I think it a debt to name him) gave fifteen hundred pounds to this service, apprehending it a charity to England, as well as to the poor sufferers. See here a letter from the most reverend the archbishop of Tuam, and seven others; all of them, I think, bishops of that kingdom; I am sure most of them are.

TO MR. THOMAS FIRMIN.

SIR,

BEING occasionally met together at Dublin, on a public account; and often discoursing of the great relief, which the protestants of this kingdom found among their brethren in England, in the time of our late miseries; we cannot treat the subject without as frequent mention of your name, who so chearfully and entirely devoted yourself to
that

that ministry. We consider, with all thankfulness, how much the public charity was improved by your industry; and we are witnesses of your indefatigable pains and faithfulness in the distribution; by which many thousands were preserved from perishing. We know also, that some who refused to take out of the common stock, as being desirous to cut off occasion of murmurs, were, however, by your mediation, comfortably subsisted by private benevolences. We doubt not, but you and they have the earnest of your reward in the peace of your minds; which we pray God to fill with comforts, and illuminate with his truths; making his grace to abound in them, who have abounded in their charity to others. And we intreat, that you, and all such as you know to have had their parts in this service, would believe, that we shall ever retain a grateful remembrance of it; as some testimony whereof, we desire you, for yourself in particular, to receive this acknowledgement of your kindness to our brethren, and therein to

Your much obliged
and most humble servants,

Jo. Tuam,

W. Clonfert,

Bar. Fernleigh,

S. Elpin,

Edw. Cork and Ross,

N. Waterford,

R. Clogher,

W. Raphoe.

Certainly

Certainly, a letter very worthy of their episcopal character; and which I have inserted in these memoirs, as much out of regard and reverence to them, as for the sake of Mr. Firmin.

In April, 1693, Mr. Firmin entered upon part of the care of another hospital, that of St. Thomas, in Southwark; a foundation intended for the relief of all sorts of lame, or wounded, or sick persons, till they are recovered by the application of proper medicines, and other means; and by the service of the physicians and surgeons of the hospital. Sir Robert Clayton (now father of the city of London) being, upon the decease of Sir John Lawrence, chosen president of this hospital, thought fit to accept of that province: but upon view of it, he took notice that it was greatly gone to ruin, the ground about the lodgings in a long tract of time raised so high, that the patients lay as it were in a cellar, without the benefit of air or good scent, but close and noisome: and the roof and walls so out of repair, that the poor patients oft-times could not lie dry in their beds. He saw the greater part of it must be rebuilt, it could not be repaired; and that the rebuilding could not be delayed without great danger and damage to the place, whereof some part prevented the workmen's pulling it down, by falling of itself: therefore, knowing well his friend Mr. Firmin's activity, and good address, in works of that nature,

nature, he caused him to be chosen one of the governors of that hospital. He was chosen in April; and finding that the revenues of the hospital would go but a little way in the rebuildings or repairs, and besides could not be well spared from the supply of the wounded and sick; in July he provided three round boxes, in each of them a parchment, one for subscriptions of one hundred pounds, the second for subscriptions of fifty pounds, the third for twenty-five or twenty pounds subscriptions. The president was pleased to subscribe three hundred pounds, and other governors were liberal; so were divers merchants, and other rich traders; that the whole subscription was not much short of four thousand pounds. Without doubt, the greatest part of this money would have been subscribed, though Mr. Firmin had not been the solicitor for it: yet I reckon, and am supported in my computation by knowing and equal judges, that the subscription was greater by a thousand pounds, than it would have been if Mr. Firmin had not been concerned in procuring and improving the subscriptions. A prospect of the charge being taken, and some money (near four thousand pounds) toward it procured; materials must also be provided; and workmen consulted and agreed with. Mr. Firmin was constant in the committee appointed for that matter. I took notice, that the master-builders made their most frequent

frequent application to him ; and he was as careful to oversee their proceedings. Several of the wards for the patients are now finished ; besides a spacious hall, supported by pillars, which make a very handsome piazza. It troubled the governors very much, that they were obliged to rebuild the church of that parish, which would cost some thousands of pounds, that could not be taken out of the revenue of the hospital, without great prejudice to the house and patients. It happened that the parliament were then about settling a tax for finishing St. Paul's church, in London ; so the governors of St. Thomas's hospital petitioned the house of commons to have some share in that tax toward the rebuilding their church : but because many other parishes prayed the like assistance at the same time, the house, upon a debate in a grand committee, resolved, that only St. Paul's and Westminster-abbey churches should have any such provision allowed to them. Mr. Firmin hereupon came home, not a little heavy : but he, and another of the governors, put into writing (that very night) some reasons, why St. Thomas's church might better claim some favour of the honourable house, than other ordinary churches. They used such diligence as to get their paper printed against the next morning. Mr. Firmin and his associate gave copies of it to the members as they entered the house ; telling them, they must not expect to

have any sick or wounded seamen cured, if they did not grant something towards the rebuilding of that church. The effect was, that the house took the matter again into consideration, and allowed three thousand pounds to the hospital for the use he desired: on which our friend came home with more pleasure and satisfaction, than if an estate of that value had fallen to himself.

Among his other charities, he was not unkind of those that suffered by fire, but would immediately apply himself to them for their present relief: afterwards, he assisted them in following their business, and in managing their business (when obtained) to the best advantage. He often lent money to honest persons, to answer sudden emergencies or distresses; but he lost so much this way, that he was forced, at last, resolutely to forbear lending: but, instead of lending, he would many times give some part of what they desired to borrow.

He put very many boys to apprenticeships, and contributed to the setting them up, if they had served their apprenticeships faithfully and diligently. He has told me, that the clergy of London, and other dignified persons in the church, often enabled him in this kind of charity: he said, he had put many boys out with the money of some of the richer clergy; who considered this (he thought) as a sort of charity that extends to the person's whole life,

life, and might be the ground of many charities in time to come,

It deserves, in my opinion, to be reckoned among his charities, that when (some two or three years since) there was a great scarcity of current coin, all the money in England being either clipped, or debased by mixture of coarse metals, he lessened his expence by laying down his coach, that he might be the more able to continue his former charities, at a time when they were more needful than ever.

I have now accounted for the general endeavours and performances of Mr. Firmin's life: the particulars, to each general head, were too numerous to be reckoned up, without tiring the reader, if not also the writer. We have therefore taken only a short view of a person, of middle extraction, and slender beginnings, who raised himself to the honour of a very great number of illustrious friendships, and to an affluence of worldly wealth, which, when he had attained, by industry, integrity, and worth, like our saviour, *he went about doing good*. Nay, like the same saviour, *he became poor, that, through his poverty, others might be rich*. A person, who, in respect of his endeavours in all kinds of charity, may deservedly be called *the father of the poor*; in respect of the Irish and French refugees, *the almoner of England*. The divine hand had quali-

ded him to do much good; himself sought out the objects and occasions for it, and delighted in the doing. He did it with so much diligence and application, that he might even have said, with our saviour, *My meat is to do the will of him that sent me; and to finish his works*; i. e. the works that he hath commanded. (John iv. 34.)

The jesuit that assisted the late famous marshal Luxembourg in his last hours, thought he might put this question to him: "Well, sir, tell me, had you not rather, now, have given one alms to a poor man, in his distress, for God's sake, than have won so many victories in the field of battle?" The marshal confessed he should now choose the former; seeing nothing will avail any man, in the eternal world, but only the actions of charity, or of justice and piety. The confessor doth not seem to have been impertinent in the question; for, in our serious last hours, we shall all be sensible, and forward to confess, that we were wise only in that part of our life that was laid out in the duties either of humanity to men, or piety to God. The Craffi and Cræsi, the Hannibals and Luxemburghs, the most conspicuous for wealth, or military glory, how gladly would they now give all that tinsel, for some part of our Firmin's sweat and drudgeries for the poor, and for the deserving? Is it for want of faith, or of consideration, that we so much more delight to
read

read the acts of the Alexanders, the Charlemaignes, and other false heroes, than of persons that have been exemplary for justice, beneficence, or devotion; and are now triumphant in heaven, on the account of those services to God, and to men. But so it is, either because we *are not christians*, or because we *are fools*; we are (commonly speaking) better pleased with the sons of earth, than of heaven.

I have read somewhere, (but so long since, that I forget the author's name, and the subject of his book,) that the punishment of Judas, who betrayed our saviour, is, that he stands on the surface of a swelling dreadful sea, with his feet somewhat below the water, as if he were about to sink. The writer saith, besides his continual horror and fear of going to the bottom, a most terrible tempest of hail and wind always beats on the traitor's naked body and head: he suffers as much by cold, and the smart of the impetuous hail, as it is possible to imagine he could suffer by the fire of purgatory, or of hell. But, saith my author further, in this so great distress, Judas has one very great comfort and relief; for whereas the tempest would be insupportable, if it beat always upon him from all sides; at a little distance from him, and somewhat above him, there is stretched out a sheet of strong coarse linen cloth, which sheet intercepts a great part of the tempest. Judas

regales himself by turning sometimes one side, sometimes another side, of his head and body, to the shelter of this sheet. In short, the sheet is such a protection to him, that it defends him from the one half of his punishment. But by what meritorious action, or actions, did Judas deserve so great a favour? Our author answers, he gave just the same quantity of linen cloth to a certain poor family, for shirting. It had been impossible that this gentleman should hit on such a conceit as this, but from our natural opinion of the value and merit of charity; it seems to us a virtue so excellent, that it may excuse even Judas from some part of his punishment. I can hardly afford to ask the reader's pardon for this tale; I incline to think, that divers others may be as well pleased with the wit of it, and the moral implied in it, as I have been, who remember it after above forty years reading, without remembering either the author, or argument of the book.

I return once more to our dear Firmin, to take leave of him for ever. He had very much weakened his (otherwise) strong and firm constitution, by his manifold charitable employments, &c. having been sometimes liable to the jaundice, often afflicted with cholics, and scarce ever without a cough; his lungs had long been phthysical. He would often return home so tired and depressed in his spirits, that his pulse was scarce to be felt,

or very languid: he would then take a little rest in his chair, and start up from it, and appear very vigorous in company, especially where any good was to be done. The more immediate cause of his death was a fever which seized his spirits, beginning with a chillness and shivering, and then a heat ensued. He was, at the same time, afflicted both in his lungs with a great shortness of breath, not having strength to expectorate, and also with such terrible pains in his bowels, that for many hours nothing could be made to pass him. He had for many years been troubled with a large rupture. All which made his sickness very short. He had wished, in his life-time, that he might not lie above two days on his last sick-bed; God granted to him his desire; he lay not so long by eight hours; and December 20, about two of the clock in the morning, anno 1697, he died.

During his last illness, he was visited by his most dear friend, the bishop of Gloucester. What passed between them, his lordship hath made me to know, under his own hand, in these words: *Mr. Firmin told me he was now going: and I trust, said he, God will not condemn me to worse company than I have loved, and used, in the present life. I replied, That he had been an extraordinary example of charity; the poor had a wonderful blessing in you: I doubt not, these works will follow you, if you have no expectation from the*
the

the merit of them; but rely on the infinite goodness of God, and the merits of our favour. Here he answered, I do so; and I say, in the words of my favour, When I have done all, I am but an unprofitable servant. He was in such an agony of body, for want of breath, that I did not think fit to speak more to him, but only give him assurance of my earnest prayers for him, while he remained in this world. Then I took solemn and affectionate farewell of him; and he of me.

It is usual to conclude Lives with a character of the persons, both as to their bodies, and the qualities of their minds: therefore I must further add: Mr. Firmin was of a low stature, well proportioned; his complexion fair and bright; his eye and countenance lively; his aspect manly, and promising somewhat extraordinary; you would readily take him for a man of good sense, worth, and dignity. Walking or sitting he appeared more comely than standing still; for his mien and action gave a gracefulness to his person.

The endowments, inclinations, and qualities of his mind, may be best judged of by the account we have given of his life. It appears, he was quick of apprehension, and dispatch, and yet almost indefatigably industrious; properties that very rarely meet in the same man. He was, besides, inquisitive, and very ingenious; that is, he had a thirst of knowing much; and his fine and mercurial

wit enabled him to acquire a large knowledge, with little labour; but he was utterly against subtilties in religion. He could not dissemble; on the contrary, you might easily perceive his love or anger, his liking or dislike: I have thought, in both these respects, he was rather too open; but both are the effects of sincerity, and arguments of an honest mind. He never affected proudly the respects of others, whether above or below him: with which I was the better satisfied, because it follows, that his charities proceeded not from any affectation of honour, or glory, among men; but from the love of God, and his afflicted brother. He was facetious enough, but without affecting it; for he valued (what indeed himself excelled in) judgment, rather than wit. He was neither presuming nor over-bold, nor yet timorous; a little prone to anger, but never excessive in it, either as to measure or time: which affections, whether you say of the body or mind, occasion great uneasiness, and sometimes great calamities and mischiefs, to persons who are governed by those passions. If the mind is turbulent by strong passions of any sort, the life is seldom serene and calm, but vexed with great griefs and misadventure. His manner of conversing was agreeable; so that seldom any broke friendship with him. Being well assured in himself of his own integrity, he could even unconcernedly hear that this or
that

that man spoke ill of him. When I told him of that infamous story of the impudent coffee-man, which had been broached six or seven years before, had he not been over-persuaded, he would not have taken any notice of him: yet was more concerned at Mr. B.'s printing it, than at the other fellow's inventing it; not from the least consciousness of guilt, but that he should be so unchristianly used by a minister of the gospel, who too rashly took up the story against him. Which shews what strange things may be done under pretence of a zeal for religion.

My lady Clayton has so great a respect for his memory, that she has (with the concurrence of sir Robert), since his death, erected a handsome monument in their garden, at Marden, in Surry, in a walk there, called Mr. Firmin's walk, by reason of his contrivance and activity in it. This monument is a marble pillar, about eight feet high, with an urn, and flowers growing out of the top of it, with this motto, *Floruit funus virtus*; an emblem, you may conceive, of death and resurrection. There is also a marble table fixed to one side of this pillar, with the inscription following.

TO PERPETUATE (AS FAR AS MARBLE AND
LOVE CAN DO IT) THE MEMORY OF THO-
MAS FIRMIN, CITIZEN OF LONDON.

None ever passed the several periods of human life more irreproachably, or performed the common duties of society with greater sincerity and approbation. Though it appears, by his public spirit, that he thought himself born rather for the benefit of others, than his own private advantage; yet the satisfaction of doing good, and the universal esteem of honest men, made him the happiest person in the world. But his charity (which was not confined to any nation, sect, or party) is most worthy thy imitation, at least in some degree, O reader. He was as liberal of his own, as faithful in distributing the pious donations of others, whom he successfully persuaded to relieve the distressed, particularly the laborious poor; for of vagrant, idle, and insolent beggars, he was no advocate nor encourager. His agreeable temper rendering him an extraordinary lover of gardens, he contrived this walk, which bears his name, and where his improving conversation and example are still remembered. But since heaven has better disposed of him, this pillar is erected to charity and friendship by Sir Robert Clayton, and Martha his lady, who first builded and planted in Marden.

Born at Ipswich, in Suffolk.

Buried in Christ-church hospital, London.

I have

I have now answered the demand of divers, as well strangers as friends, of writing and publishing some account of Mr. Firmin's life and death: I hope the well-minded reader will find much in it, that may both confirm and strengthen him in the best ways, especially in humanity and charity. He may see here, how much beneficence a good man, of but indifferent estate, is capable of exercising, by means of acquaintance and conversation with well-chosen friends, whom he may excite, by his example and solicitations, to be highly useful in their generation; and thereby be himself incomparably more useful, than otherwise he could be. But if I am less successful in that part of my design, than I wish to be; yet I have much eased my own mind, by paying some part of the debt that I owe to the memory of our friend. The rest I shall be always paying, by a grateful and mournful sense of the public and my own loss and benefit by him, when present, and as now deceased.

I cannot better conclude these short memoirs, than in the words of a letter, written to the author of the ensuing sermon, by a person of great worth; and who, from the time that they became acquainted, enabled Mr. Firmin to do many of those great services to the public, the deserving, and the poor, for which he was so highly commendable.

“ Sir,

" Sir,

" I received your letter of February 16, and
 " therewith the parentation to our valuable friend
 " Mr. Thomas Firmin; that man of so extraor-
 " dinary affections, and abilities, for the great
 " works of charity and piety. May it please the
 " divine providence to raise up to us adequate suc-
 " cessors. In the mean time, what an abate-
 " ment of sorrow is it to us, that He who alone is
 " absolutely good and all-powerful, lives for ever ?
 " —I am your affectionate and assured friend,

" B R. P R."

He had often signified his desire to be buried in Christ-church-hospital, when dead, the care of which had been so much upon his heart while living. In compliance with which desire, his relatives have interred him in the cloysters there, and placed, in the wall adjoining, a marble to his memory, with this inscription, viz.

Under that stone, near this place, lyeth the body of Thomas Firmin, late citizen of London, a governor of this and saint Thomas's hospital; who, by the grace of God, was created in Christ Jesus good works, wherein he was indefatigably industrious, and successfully provoked many others thereto; becoming also their almoner, visiting and relieving the poor at their houses; and in prisons, whence

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also

also he redeemed many. He set many hundreds of them at work, to the expending of great stocks: He rebuilt, repaired, and added conveniencies to hospitals, weekly over-seeing the orphans. The refugees from France and from Ireland, have partaken largely the effects of his charity, pains, and earnest solicitations for them. He was wonderfully zealous in every good work, beyond the example of any in our age. Thus shewed he his faith by his works, and cannot reasonably be reproached for that which brought forth such plenty of good fruits.

He died December xx. 1697, and in the 66th year of his age.

T H E E N D.

A S E R M O N,

ON LUKE X. 36, 37.

OCCASIONED BY THE

D E A T H

O F

MR. THOMAS FIRMIN;

A N D

PREACHED IN THE COUNTRY.



A S E R M O N,

ON LUKE X. 36, 37.

WHICH OF THESE THREE, THINKEST THOU, WAS NEIGHBOUR TO HIM THAT FELL AMONG THE THIEVES? HE ANSWERED, HE THAT SHEWED MERCY ON HIM. THEN SAID JESUS, GO, AND DO THOU LIKEWISE,

OUR saviour is talking here with a learned jew ; one of the questions between them, as we are taught by another evangelist, was, which is the great, or chief, commandment of God's law ? It is an inquiry not altogether needless, for it happens sometimes, that there is a clash, as they speak, of laws ; if you will keep one law, you must break another. For instance, one law said ; *Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy ; in it thou shalt do no manner of work, thou, or thy son, or daughter.* But the law at Gen. xvii. 12. says, *He that is eight days old shall be circumcised.* And the law at Numbers xxviii. 3, 9. *This is the offering to be made by fire ; —two lambs without spot, day by day, the one in morning, the other in the evening : but on the sabbath two lambs.* Every one sees these laws would

often clash with one another ; in keeping one the other must be neglected. If your child happen to be *eight days old* on the sabbath-day, either you violate the sabbath by *the work* of circumcision ; or, out of regard to the law of the sabbath, you must transgress the law of circumcising on the eighth day. In like manner, if you keep the sabbath, as the law of the fourth commandment requires, by doing therein *no manner* of work ; you could not obey the law about the burnt-offering or sacrifice, that was to be made in the temple of God twice every day : namely, two lambs to *be killed*, their skins drawn off, and their bodies burnt on the altar, every morning, and every evening. It is in consideration of this that our saviour says, (*Matth. xii. 5.*) *Have ye not read, how, on the sabbath days, the priests do profane the sabbath, and yet are blameless ?* His meaning is, though the priests do break the law of the sabbath, which saith, *Thou shalt do no manner of work on the sabbaths ;* yet they are blameless herein, because at the same time they obey another-law, which saith, *They shall offer the appointed sacrifices every morning and evening.* A great number of such like cases happening every day ; cases, wherein, by observing one law of God, you could not avoid to omit another : therefore, it was very requisite to determine which of God's laws were chief laws ; or were to be observed.

observed in a clash with another law (or laws) of God.

The jewish rabbies had established some rules, that were of great authority among the more zealous of their nation, for directing men's practice in doubts of this nature ; yet so, that divers cases were left undecided, and many questions were debated warmly enough among them. They could not agree in resolving *this* question, Which is the great or chief law *of all*? Some said, the law of *the sabbath*, or fourth commandment; is the principal of all the divine laws ; for two reasons. It is that law, or appointment, by which our religion is preserved, and kept up ; and that both as to the knowledge, and the practice of duty. And it was that law which was first given by God ; no sooner had he made the world, than he blessed and sanctified the seventh day. (*Gen. ii. 2.*) *God ended the work which he had made, and rested on the seventh day ; therefore he blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it.* But other learned men of that nation denied that the sabbath is the chief commandment ; giving this reason : because it must give place to *the work* of circumcision, and to *the work* of sacrificing. A child who is eight days old must be circumcised, though his eighth day shall happen on the sabbath ; and the morning and evening sacrifice must be slain, and offered even on the sabbaths. Therefore these said, circumcision is the great law of all ;

all ; it being the sacrament, or sign, of the covenant between God and our nation. Him that is not circumcised, God doth not consider as an israelite, but as a pagan or heathen ; as is plainly intimated in the texts that speak of circumcision. Lastly, some of their divines thought that the law of sacrifices must take place of all laws : for, not to sacrifice, was not to worship God ; sacrificing being the only worship then appointed. And their sacrifices were the expiations, or atonements, for their sins, ordained and accepted by God. So that, not to sacrifice, was to stand guilty, before God, of all their sins. They were liable to his judgments, on account of their sins, till the atonement was made by the daily sacrifice.

These were their opinions, and the principal reasons of them. The jew, in our text, either not well satisfied with any of these answers ; or, it may be, so well persuaded of one of them, that he imagined nothing could be said against it ; put the question to our saviour : *Master, says he, I would know which of all the commandments is the chief ?* To this our saviour immediately answers ; I will tell thee : The first, or principal, commandment, thou shalt find it at Deut. vi. 4, 5. *Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord ; and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and soul, and might.* As who should say, the

the chief commandment is, that a man *believe and profess the unity of God*; and that we *love him*, with all our might, or soul. I have told thee, continues our saviour, which is the first great commandment; I will add what thou hast not asked, Which is the second, or next great law? Thou hast it at Lev. xix. 18. *Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself*. The jewish doctor was amazed at this answer by our saviour. He granted, presently, that it was true and certain in both parts of it. It is true, says he, that there is one God, and none other but he; and to love him with all the soul and strength, and one's neighbour as one's self; this is more and better than all sacrifices, the which are commonly supposed to be the chief commandments.

But their discourse still goes on. I am well satisfied, says the jew, which is the first great law, and which is the next to it: but whereas the second of these commandments says, *Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself*; it may be a question, Who is my neighbour, whom I am to love (saith the commandment) as myself? Are my neighbours those of the vicinage, the next dwellers to me? or are they my whole town? or all those of the same country with me; even all jews? or are they my relations? For there are all these opinions of doctors on that text. Hear, says our saviour, what happened not long since in these parts,

parts, and it will serve for an answer to thy question. A jew was travelling from Jerusalem to Jericho; in his way, a company of robbers came up to him; they took from him his money, and even his clothes; and having wounded him dangerously, left him for dead. Shortly comes that way a levite, and, but little after him, a priest; both these, seeing a naked body, covered with blood, kept at a distance, and passed on. In the mean time, the wounded man lay as dead; and, while he so lay, there came by also a samaritan. The samaritans, you know, are of another nation, and different religion, from us jews: for all that, he made no difficulty of coming to, and viewing the wounded jew. He imagined there might be life still left in him: and therefore, first covering him with a part of his own garments, he began to cleanse and dress his wounds. Upon this, the signs of life soon appeared, the wounded man revived, and by help of this charitable stranger was brought to an inn. But, alas! what shall he do? wounded, naked, and without money, he was still in a forlorn, hopeless condition. The samaritan, aware that he had done nothing yet, if he did not go forward, calls for the landlord, or host. Friend, says he, I know not this man; but you know me: therefore, take care of him in all respects, his diet, clothes, and health; when I return, I will satisfy for all. To bind this promise and bargain,

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take these two denarii in way of earnest, before these witnesses. Now, says our saviour, thou that askest, Who is my neighbour? let me see whether thou canst not answer it of thyself? Was it the levite, or the priest, or was it the samaritan, that deserved to be accounted and called the neighbour? The jew was again overcome, and therefore replies, in the words of our present text: *He was the neighbour that shewed mercy.* Was he so? says our saviour again: *Then go, and do thou (ὁμοίως) in like manner; do so; do as thou hast said.* My meaning is, reckon him to be thy neighbour, whom thou hast but now confessed to be, in truth, the neighbour; even the man who is a doer of good. Though he should be, or she be, a samaritan, of a foreign nation, of a false religion; yet, if he is a lover of men, one that does good to others, account him thy neighbour, whom thou art to love as thyself.

This determination, or conclusion, by our saviour, was very contrary to the humour and practice of those times: for both the jews and the samaritans not only did not account of one another as neighbours, whom they should love as themselves, but they even hated and persecuted each the other. The jew would have no dealings with the samaritans; and the samaritan would not receive, or sell, even necessary provisions to the jews. (John iv. 9.) *Then said the woman of Samaria,*
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How is it, that thou, being a jew, askest drink of me, who am of Samaria? For the jews have no dealings with the samaritans. Again, (Luke ix. 52.) *Jesus sent messengers before him, who came to a village of the samaritans; but they did not receive him, because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem; that is, The faces of Jesus and his company being toward Jerusalem, therefore the samaritans, supposing he was a jew, would not receive him into their inns.* So much can a bad example do, when it grows to be common; it will persuade men even against their honest and just profit: the very victuallers on a road shall deny entertainment to passengers of another religion, if example has made it customary to do despite to such persons.

The cause of so great aversion and displeasure between the samaritans and jews, was (as has been already hinted) difference of religion. The samaritans owned only the first five books of holy scripture, namely, the books written by Moses. As to the prophets, the books of Solomon, the psalms of David, Job, the books of Kings and Chronicles, Nehemiah, Ezra, Ruth, Esther: these they received not as *divine books*. There is no doubt that, in these matters, the samaritans were to blame, and were in the wrong; the jews had the advantage in all points that were controverted between them and the samaritans. Nay, farther,
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the samaritans mistook, even about the object of worship, GOD. Their notions or apprehensions of God seem to have been confused and uncertain. They are the words of our saviour, (John iv. 22.) *Ye (ye samaritans) know not what ye worship; we (we jews) know what we worship.* The error, then, of the samaritans, consisted not only in refusing divers books, belonging to the old Testament; but their conceptions or opinions concerning God were not clear, nor true. Ye know not, says our saviour, what ye worship; that is, ye know not God: some knowledge ye have of him, but ye know him not rightly: it is an obscure, confused, and, for the most part of it, a mistaken knowledge that ye have of him.

Of this nation, and of this religion, was the person whom our text so much commends. This is he of whom our saviour says here, he was the true neighbour; the person whom the law of God intends when it says, *Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.* He was not a jew; that is, he was not of the *true church of God.* He owned but a small part of holy scripture, disowning the far greater part of the divine word. His knowledge of the object of worship, of God, was so imperfect, and uncertain, and confused, that our saviour himself pronounces, the men of that religion know not God. But, with all these infelicities, he was a doer of good, a lover of men;

adorned with beneficent, charitable principles : not carried away by the common and general example, whether of the samaritans or jews, to hate others merely for their religion ; open-handed and well-affected to men, as men. Such a one, says our saviour in this text, is to be accounted a neighbour ; he belongs to that charge and law of God, *Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself*. A levite or a priest, though he is the minister of God, most high, may less deserve the benefit of that law : he may not have so good a claim to it, as a man of a far country, and another religion ; the good man, the doer of good, is that person who only can challenge it as his right, to be loved as ourselves.

Give me leave to make these few short remarks hereupon.

1. Our most blessed saviour prefers here the samaritan before the levite and the priest ; the doer of good, before the man of right faith, or true opinions. The reason is, a man's faith, his right sect or way of religion, why, it is a desirable thing, a valuable felicity ; but it does good to nobody, but the person himself. If I hold the true religion in all respects, so as not to mistake so much as in one point ; What is the world, what is my neighbour, the better for my great and exact knowledge and skill ? But if, like the samaritan in this text, I am a lover of men, a doer of good,

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open-handed ; or, if I cannot do so, yet open-hearted ; a great many others, one time or other, shall be the better for this. We cannot reasonably wonder that God esteems a virtue which is useful to many, before a right faith, or true knowledge, which are not a common and general good, as the doing of good is.

I know well there are divers such worldlings as have no relish for such discourses as these. They reckon, they have no need of any body, and that they are cunning enough never to lack other men's help. But so also all those have thought, who have most needed the assistance of others ; those, for instance, who have become the subjects of briefs, letters of recommendation, and other forms of begging. All these, or most of them, said in their day of prosperity, " I shall " never be moved : thou, Lord, of thy goodness, " hast made my mountain to stand strong." Hear me, son of this world ; Mayest not thou, like the man of this text, fall among thieves ? May not they, (the thieves,) rob thee, wound thee, and leave thee for dead ? Certainly this may happen to you, and so may a hundred other, as unexpected, unlooked-for accidents ; so that were there no samaritans, none that cared at any time for any but themselves, the uncertain world we live in would be a dangerous place ; and the worldling might as soon find it such as any other man. They will

say, such accidents fall out so seldom, that we need not to change our ordinary course, for fear of such things. But in very deed they happen oftener, and to worldlings, than they have good consideration enough to think of and lay to heart. Alas, it is almost every day, and in every place, that we fall among thieves, that rob us, and that almost quite strip us, if also they do not wound us. Not seldom, the times are thieves to us; other-while the wife, or prodigal children. A knavish kindred, false servants, grinding masters, a litigious or envious neighbourhood, sometimes rob us, and send us away naked, or next to naked, even bare and necessitous. The rich themselves too often experience the straits to which these sorts of thieves do reduce men; they make the rich to be poor in the midst of the greatest abundance and plenty: so that certainly it were to be wished there were more samaritans, more well-conditioned, well-disposed, and open-hearted persons.

2. Again, I take notice; it is not indeed in every one's power to do as this samaritan, to relieve the poor or distressed in their wants, or to encourage the worthy and deserving in their excellent endeavours. But though few of us have the samaritan's purse, all may and should have his spirit. We can all of us countenance and be of party with the well-deserving; and the poor we can all of us help by our counsel, favour, good looks,

looks, and good words. There is no commandment of God but all persons may earn the recompence that belongs to it; for all of us can perform it, either in act, or by approving, applauding, and favouring it. I make the deed of this samaritan, nay, all the best deeds of all other public-spirited, well-disposed men, to be mine; if, wanting their wealth, or their opportunities, *I esteem their persons for their actions, the men for what they do, or have done.* As, on the contrary, but too many do make the lust, debaucheries, and other vices, of their friends, or strangers, to be their own; in that they love or esteem the persons on those very accounts. You shall hear them telling with great pleasure, with many approving smiles, the wicked or lewd deeds of some others; especially when the wickedness has a mixture either of wit, or seeming bravery and courage. The first beginnings of excellent virtue, of whatsoever kind, are (usually) in our approbation of those kind of actions: when we have used some time to make them ours by our good-liking and esteem of them, we grow such ourselves, before we are well aware of it: I mean, grow such in spirit, in inclination; though opportunity or ability of acting accordingly may be wanting.

The inclination, the spirit, is accepted by God, no less than the act or performance. This is the peculiar advantage of God's service; it is not

found in the service of any other whomsoever; that the inclination of the mind goes for the act itself, and that God recompences the well-disposed, as the well-doer. In short, this is our privilege and our comfort, as christians; we may all be samaritans, without the purse of the samaritan, or his opportunities.

3. Not the levite, not the priest, says our saviour here, but the samaritan, the doer of good, is that neighbour, whom by God's law thou art to love as thyself. It is true, the samaritan is of another religion; he is so overseen, as not to own some books that are genuine parts of holy scripture: nay, he has great mistakes about the very object of worship, about the very person of God; his conceptions of God are so confused and uncertain, that he worships he knows not (well) what. For all that, I say to thee, seeing he is an useful man, full of good works, thou art to love him as thyself; his strange country, or his mistaken religion, notwithstanding. Nobody will deny, that this is our saviour's plain meaning in this text, and the context. But if so, why is it the practice of so many, to be disaffected to the very best persons, for their (supposed) errors in religion? How dare we to contravene, go against, the undeniable charge given to us all in this plain text? The man, say you, is a samaritan; in our judgment he is mistaken in some points of religion;
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it may be about the very object of worship; the nature and the properties of God. I pray, christians, think of it, that it is our saviour who supposes that the person is indeed a samaritan: he tells us plainly he is of a different religion from the true church, and even that he worships he knows not what: yet, after all, the same saviour says, decrees, this is thy neighbour, whom thou art to love as thyself; because, says he, he is a doer of good, open-hearted, well-conditioned. I will have thee (says that teacher, *whom we are to hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto us*) to embrace this samaritan; to think him worthy of more love than the orthodox levite or priest, sound in the faith.

But here, what say some men? What, embrace a samaritan, a heretic, a man of false religion? We have learned better things, and that from holy scripture, from the word of God itself. (Titus iii. 10.) "A man that is an heretic, after the first and second admonition, reject;" that is, cast him off, have nothing to do with him, avoid him as a pest. It is too common, among the contending parties of christians, to take scripture words and names; and, having put them on the wrong person or subject, to conclude presently, we have confuted, and shamed them. A heretic, says the apostle, reject him, cast him off. Right! but then let us mean by heretics what he means.

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He means factious persons, whether they be of a right or a wrong opinion in religion. To say it in few words, heresy is bigotry or faction; and heretic is a bigot, a factious or turbulent person, whether such person happens to be right or wrong in his opinions. *Hereses sunt placita vehementius defensa*, says a most learned critic: "Heresy is
 " any opinion, whether in philosophy, religion,
 " or politics; for which men contend too earnestly
 " and fiercely." It is not then the truth or falsehood of any opinion that makes it to be heresy, and the person that holds it a heretic; it is the stir, clamour, and bustle made about it by any, that makes the opinion heresy, and the man a heretic: concerning such men the apostle directs well, *reject them*; after having admonished them once and again of their dangerous warmth, avoid them, have no more to do with them. But as for others who are mistaken, (that is, we think they are mistaken in their doctrines,) the charge concerning them is, not *reject them*, or avoid them. On the contrary, we are cautioned *not to judge them*, not to *condemn them*; and for this reason, because they erring conscientiously, *God receives them, God accepts them, God will uphold them*. (Rom. xiv. 4.) "Who art thou that
 " judgest (*ἀλλότριον δυνάτην*;) the servant of ano-
 " ther? To his own master, to God, he must
 " stand or fall; yea, he shall be bolden up." He
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had said in the foregoing verse, (*προσελάβετο αὐτὸν ὁ Θεός,*) *God hath accepted him, or God hath received him.*

In short, they say, a *heretic* is to be rejected. I answer, yes, every *bigot*, every turbulent person, every fire-brand, of whatsoever sect or persuasion. But for heretics, that are commonly so misnamed, (that is, persons erring in doctrine,) it will but ill become us to *reject them*, when the holy scriptures assure us in express terms *God accepts them*.

4. Lastly, As the divine wisdom and goodness has made it to be our duty, to love the doer of good as ourselves; so, in dispensing his last sentence, and the everlasting recompences, himself will consider, not what the opinions of men have been, but what good they have done to other men. When our saviour describes that general judgment in which all men shall receive their last and irrevocable doom, shall be adjudged by God, either to happiness or misery: he assures us, the reason of both these shall be grounded, by the most holy judge, on our forwardness and frequency in doing good to others, or (on the contrary) our neglect thereof. The manner and reasons of that judgment are very particularly stated in the gospel by St. Matthew, (chap. xxv.) to this effect or sense: When the son of man is descended from the highest heavens, *in the glory of the Father*; which is to say, waited
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on by a gliftring, triumphant train of angels and feraphims; they will present to him *the throne of glory*, the tribunal or judgment-seat of the whole world. So soon as he is seated thereon, the earth and sea giving up their dead, there will *be gathered before him all nations*; the men of all countries, of all ages, since the first creation of things; of all conditions, states, or degrees; and especially of all religions. Never before and never again will there be such an assembly; the first parents of all mankind, the particular progenitors (or patriarchs) of the several nations, all the great personages, whether for dignity, wisdom, wealth, wit, arts, or success, that have ever been. All these mingled with the promiscuous, plebeian crowd, and; not less than they, under the most mortifying doubts and fears, what shall become of them. The judge, unmoved, declares, in the first place, that all their former distinctions are now to cease; he will consider them but only as sheep or goats, as good or bad. All your other differences, says he, were intended only as trials, or as opportunities; trials what you would deserve, or opportunities of doing well or doing ill. They were only to prepare you for this day, and this judgment; to make you capable subjects of God's everlasting love, and the beatitudes consequent thereon; or else objects of justice, for your neglects of duty, and abuses of the power, wealth, and

and talents, that were trusted to your management. This is no sooner said, than ministering angels separate the one from the other ; in the language there used, they divide the sheep from the goats ; persons that have been innocent and useful, from the wily and harmful. Then follows the sacred irreversibile sentence : you that have fed the hungry, clothed the naked, relieved the prisons and sick families ; in short, you that *have shown mercy* by exercising any sort or kind of beneficence, are to *inherit everlasting mercy*, even the joys and kingdom that so well correspond to such actions and ways. But you on the other hand of me, that have done all things contrary, it is the will of God that you depart forthwith into that punishment, by fire, which God, all-wise and all-powerful, has thought you worthy of ; and will so far support you, as to enable you to suffer it.

This is the purport and substance of that famous portion of holy scripture. I cannot stand now to make any other reflection upon it, than this, for which I alledged it : that when the men of all nations, which includes (and implies) the men of all faiths, shall be judged by our saviour, he will give sentence, he will make them miserable, or happy, on the foot of their good or bad deeds ; their deeds of charity or other beneficence ; without any respect to their opinions, to the doctrines they

they believed, or thought they had cause to deny or to doubt of.

In answer to this context, I have heard some men say: It is true, indeed, our saviour mentions there, only the doing good to others, as the cause of salvation; but it is certain, from a great many other texts, that justice or righteousness is also a necessary condition of salvation, and no less necessary than charity or beneficence, or doing good to others, is. Therefore, whereas our saviour (there) instances in beneficence, without speaking either of justice, or of a right faith: it was because beneficence is the principal, not because it is the only, condition of men's salvation. But I pray let us not so interpret scripture, as to destroy it. Our saviour says expressly, in that context, he will judge the men of all faiths, by their beneficence. Yes, say these (skilful and faithful) interpreters, he will judge them by their beneficence, and by their faiths. Plainly, this is not to interpret the divine word, but to add to it what and as we please.

But they say, other texts make justice a condition of salvation; therefore, beneficence cannot be the only ground of that sentence, which the judge of the world will at last pronounce. His sentence will be grounded on men's beneficence, on their justice, and right faith. A very little
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heed would have prevented this objection, and the mistake that is tacked to it. For justice is included in beneficence, as a lesser number is in a greater : he that will do me good, will be sure to do me right ; he that bestows on me what is his, will not defraud me of what is mine. In short, the beneficent person is always just : as a greater number always includes the lesser, beneficence always comprehends and implies justice. Our saviour, aware of this, did not think it necessary to make (there) express mention of justice ; but only of beneficence, which (always and necessarily) implies and includes it. But, if a right faith had also been a necessary condition of salvation, it must have been expressly named ; because it is not at all, in any degree, implied in beneficence, which is there proposed as the condition of salvation.

I have not said any thing, of all that has been said, with a design to depreciate, or lessen the esteem or value of a right faith. As it is a duty to be conscientious ; to *try the spirits* ; to *prove the doctrines, whether they be of God* ; so we must needs grant, it is matter of (just) praise, with all good and wise men, and of acceptance with God, if our faith be right, as well as our works good. It is lawful, however, to compare even jewels,

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relative worth ; to examine not only what they are in themselves, but what is their value, in a comparison with one another. We may say the pearl is better than crystal, the sapphire than the cornelian, the diamond than the amethyst. And, in like manner, especially it being after our favour, we may affirm, that well-doing is preferable to the most dextrous or lucky thinking ; it is better to be a good man, or a doer of good, than to be a learned or orthodox man.

I may err, and yet be saved : in the dark and intricate walks of controversy I may make false steps, without being (at all) the more out of my way to blessedness. But, if I am not a Samaritan, a doer of good, either in fact or in inclination and spirit, I neither have a right to be loved by my neighbour, nor to be accepted by God. No, not though I be a son of the church, by an orthodox faith and doctrine ; or even a father in the church, a priest or levite.

Thus, as well and fully as the time (allowed to these exercises) would permit, I have represented to you what encouragements God has proposed to well-doing, particularly to beneficence. I should now present you with one of the fairest examples thereof, that this age or any former could boast of, in an account and character of our deceased brother and friend, Mr. THOMAS FIR-

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MIN ; but that part of the respect that we owe to his memory, being performed to him by some others who knew him longer, and therefore can draw him more exactly, I will conclude with the doxology that is so just and so due.

To the King eternal, immortal, invisible, God only wise, be honour and glory, for ever and ever. (1 Tim. i. 17.)

THE END.

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